

WORKERS VOICE

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**COMMUNIST
WORKERS
ORGANISATION**
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
No 14 ● 20p ● 1983

U.S. UNLEASHES DOGS OF WAR!

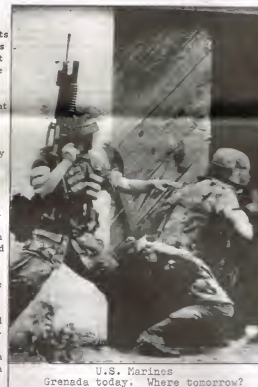
If further evidence that the economic crisis of world capitalism is pushing the world's rulers towards war were needed then the events of the last few weeks have given us it. What is most significant is the fact that the imperialist super-powers now openly declare that they are locked in mortal combat in every area of the globe. Today there are over forty local wars going on around the world. This in itself might be nothing new but the fact that Russian and American intervention in them makes them permanent is. Any one of them could spark off the final "Armageddon", which would really be "the war to end all wars".

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

But the favourite trigger point for a 3rd World War must still remain the Middle East. It is now clear that the lorry bombs in Beirut which killed nearly 300 French and US troops on 23rd October sparked off the US invasion of the tiny island of Grenada on the morning of the 25th. By ordering this invasion Reagan wiped out the damage which these bombings had struck to his aggression policies on a world scale. Without the demonstration of America's armed might in Grenada the US Congress would probably have called for the withdrawal of troops from the Lebanon within 60 days. The invasion was a practical demonstration of the American cliché that "nothing succeeds like success". And "success" was easily (though rather too bloodily) bought by rolling over a small island like Grenada. This was all part of Reagan's publicly proclaimed get-tough policy, or "counter-offensive" against "the empire of evil", the USSR, which he has announced he will fight anywhere in the world. Having spurred on the French to get deeply involved in Chad, having sent marines to Grenada, Egypt, Honduras and the Lebanon, having carried out a mock invasion of Nicaragua and just about to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe, there is no doubt that Reagan is not merely talking.

RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

And equally desperate is the other great imperialist power, the USSR. Its invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was the first direct use of Russian troops beyond the area



U.S. Marines
Grenada today. Where tomorrow?

of influence carved up between the USA and the USSR at Yalta in 1945. Russia has always been desperate to ensure a neutral or friendly buffer zone around it, and Afghanistan is like Syria or its southern flank. But the Kremlin leaders feel increasingly insecure since Russia, like every other country, is in acute economic crisis. They cannot solve their internal economic problems, let alone compete with the West to win over the regimes in charge of the peripheral capitalist countries (like Angola and Zimbabwe). Today even a pro-Soviet regime like that of Machel's in Mozambique is turning to the West to rebuild its economy. Despite Reagan's propaganda, the USSR has actually been retreating on a world scale. Its main success in the last ten years has been in de-stabilising areas like the Horn of Africa) to prevent Western influence getting stronger. The shooting down of the Korean airliner by the Russians in the Sea of Japan last month

shows just how desperate Russian imperialism is becoming.

LEBANON CIVIL WAR IS IMPERIALIST WAR

Perhaps the area where the USSR has suffered most in the last forty years is the Middle East. After making the blunder of supporting the establishment of Israel in 1948 (because they thought it would be anti-Western) they lost their influence in Iraq and Egypt whilst being unable to prevent the ~~loss of~~ their clients in Libya and in the PLO. The lowest point of Russia's fortunes in the area was reached last year when the Israelis forced the PLO out of Beirut and humiliated the pro-Russian Syrian forces in Lebanon. (See "Reagan and Begin's New Order in the Middle East" in WY 8.) In fact, if it had not been for the economic and a social crisis in Israel itself then Begin would probably have driven Syria from Lebanon. (See "Israel: New Conductor, Same Old Music" in this issue.) Since then, as we repeated in the last Workers Voice, Russian military aid on a level never seen before has been pouring into Syria. It was to counter this, in the face of the withdrawal of the Israelis to southern Lebanon, that the so-called "international peace-keeping force" was sent into Beirut. But these doves of peace soon showed they were dogs of war by attacking from land, sea and air the pro-Syrian Muslim militias which are threatening to overthrow the pro-Western Gemayel government. The so-called civil war in Lebanon is in fact a stage in the development of a world imperialist war. In this sense it is just the same as the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 or the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, which were curtain raisers to the world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45.

WORLD WAR THREE?

What is happening in the Middle East, in Central America, in Chad or in South East Asia all raise the spectre of a new world imperialist war. As we have argued, since 1979 international tensions have risen to new heights and in every crisis there lurks the possibility of a more general conflict. Increasingly the preparations are being made. The fact that there was virtually no anti-war resistance to the Falklands war, the fact that mounting casual-

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BELGAN WORKERS FIGHT BACK

An uneasy peace has returned to Belgium's streets after the September strikes in which over a million workers brought the country to a halt.

The actions of the Belgian workers can teach workers in Britain a few lessons. Belgium has a Right wing government which, like Britain's, has held down wages whilst inflation is running at 8%. It had already got away with a wage freeze and its 15% unemployment rate is the second highest in the EEC. However, when the government tried to cut public spending by cutting bonuses and holiday pay to state workers the strikes broke out.

Once again, as we see all over the world, the unions tried to prevent real class action (see the articles on France and Britain in this issue). The *Financial Times* (23.9.83), a mouthpiece of the British ruling class, revealed (naturally without realising it) exactly what was going on.

"Since September 9th the strikes in Belgium have paralysed the bureaucracy, brought public transport to an almost total halt, shut schools, ... and let rubbish accumulate in the streets. It started spontaneously." (our emphasis)

This isn't the full story. The unions had been negotiating with the government for over a month about these attacks on the working class (involving a wage cut of over £2 a week on average). It was only when the workers were finally informed what was going on that the strikes broke out. A typical case was the railway workers in Charleroi. They stood to

lose bonus pay, and when they expressed their anger in workplace meetings on September 9th the unions reluctantly agreed to a strike ... in October! The unions always claim that this gives them a chance to "negotiate" but in fact it means that the workers are dispersed, the anger dies down and some patched up settlement in the bosses' interest is sorted out. But this time neither the railway workers nor other state workers, who belong to a variety of different unions, were conned. They immediately walked out. And it took a great effort by the unions involved to catch up with them. The *Financial Times* again:

"To regain control of the strike union leaders were forced to co-operate more closely than they have done in the past."

Behind the unions was the government in the person of the Minister of the Interior who accused them of being weak because they had no control over their members!

So in a few brief days of the Belgian strike the real function of the unions was fully revealed! To restore social peace, class calm and to sell the government's policies as the "only reasonable settlement" to the workers. The *Financial Times* concluded with a lesson for the bosses everywhere:

"If governments in general are to learn anything from the events of the past fortnight in Belgium it is, perhaps, that tough economic measures affecting the monthly pay packet cannot be introduced cold. The ground needs to be prepared. The measures when they are agreed need detailed and frequent explanation."



And whose role is this? In modern capitalist society this is precisely the function of the union.

The Belgian bosses have made a tactical retreat, but with the capitalist crisis worsening daily, as it is everywhere, (bankruptcies, for example, have risen 20% in Belgium this year they will be back with more vicious, if more subtle, attacks.

The lesson for the working class is that spontaneity which produced the strike is not enough. Conscious political action to attack union efforts to get a return to work on the bosses' terms must be made. This requires the development of a communist party within the working class, inside workplaces.

U.S. UNLEASHES DOGS OF WAR

•Continued from pg 1

ties in Afghanistan has not provoked a social crisis in Russia and the fact that Reagan has won overwhelming support in the USA for his lies about why he invaded Grenada show that our rulers can be fairly confident that they can manipulate "public opinion" in their direction in support of any war. And they are already doing it. In the talks to limit nuclear weapons (the START and INF talks) both Andropov and Reagan have been manoeuvring. Each has been offering us arms reduction proposals which favour their own side (like Reagan's "Zero Option" or "build-down" programme). The aim here is like that of Hitler in 1933. When France refused to disarm immediately to German levels at the Geneva Disarmament Conference he was free to walk out of the Conference and at the time he was reckoned to have been wronged. In order to prepare workers for supporting "our side" the NATO countries are trying to get into the same position. This propaganda build-up is a reflection of the increasing belief by politicians and the military in both camps, not just that a third world war is winnable, but that it is unavoidable.

The main factor though is the economic crisis. At present the capitalist crisis engulfs the whole world and Russia (which is no less capitalist because the state rather than private firms exploit the working class) and its bloc (e.g. Poland, Hungary) are increasingly feeling its effects. However, the ruling classes in both Eastern and Western blocs, whilst preparing for war, still hold out a fading hope that the crisis can be solved economically by yet more austerity measures aimed at the working class. However, this illusion will not last for ever. The present crisis is grinding to its

inexorable conclusion, just as in the past capitalist slumps found their only "solution" in a new world war (which, by destroying workers, commodities and plant, enables accumulation to begin again on a higher level). This time, however, the cure is as bad as the disease.

THE WORKING CLASS SOLUTION

So, after over a decade of lowering living standards, destroying the means of satisfying human needs, increasing unemployment, homelessness and starvation, the final misery capitalism has to offer is war. This cannot be prevented by CND marches. 2 millions marched in European cities on the weekend of the events of Grenada and Lebanon. Who noticed them a few days later? CND didn't oppose the Falklands War. Its leader, Monsignor Bruce Kent proclaims that "We are the real patriots" since they are arguing not against the cause of war but against some of its effects. CND's precursors were no more successful in the past than they have been today. Both the Neutrality League and the Peace Pledge Union disappeared the day war started in 1914 and 1939. However, by joining them the middle class can satisfy their consciences that they have put up an intellectual protest before they go and fight for Queen and Country.

Nor can we trust in Her Majesty's Opposition, the Labour Party and their trade union movement. In the Grenadan crisis the Labour Party has made a great song and dance about US actions because the US has ignored Britain ("a blow to national pride") and because it gives the Russians a propaganda card by reveal-

ing that when Reagan decides to get tough the US is no more interested in leaving weaker states to determine their own destiny than Russia was in Afghanistan. This of course, the Labour Party realises makes it harder to drum up working class support for the West in both world wars Labour and the trades union have supported their own governments and Labour, it should not be forgotten, initiated the development of the British nuclear bomb.

Neither CND nor the Labour Party can prevent, or in fact really wants to prevent, another imperialist war. That task must fall to the working class itself. Only the working class has the power to halt production and fighting every small decision of the bosses can help to give other workers confidence that "their" bosses can be beaten. Yet fighting effects of the capitalist crisis will not be enough. Indeed, rising levels of working class resistance to more austerity and unemployment could even provoke the war crisis as the bosses realise that their austerity policies have failed to overcome the crisis. At this point the answer cannot be to give up the fight but to extend and deepen it until the battle to defend living standards turns into a fight against the state itself. Only the working class has the capacity to wield the one sure weapon which can lead to the removal of the threat of imperialist war - and that is a communist revolution which will destroy the forces of the old state (including the armed forces) and pave the way for a new society without the national frontiers and rivalries which lead to war.

4 Notes on Kurdistan and the Political forces in Iran

Translation from 'Battaglia Comunista' No. 11, July 1983

Introduction

As regular readers of Workers Voice (and Revolutionary Perspectives) will know the CWO has been conducting a series of polemics against the Iranian Supporters of the Unity of Communist Militants (SUCM) based in Britain. At the same time our comrades of the Partito Comunista Internationalista (PCI) have been carrying out a similar task in Italy. We are reprinting here an article from their paper Battaglia Comunista of last July which warns the SUCM about the dangers of fusion with Komala (The Workers Revolutionary Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan). These warnings were ignored and the fusion of UCM and Komala into what they describe as the Communist Party of Iran has since taken place. The non-communist basis of this formation will be examined in Revolutionary Perspectives 21 (to be issued December 1983). Here we simply want to briefly outline our policy for relating to groups like the SUCM.

It is clear that the present desperate crisis of world capitalism will give rise to many social revolts (such as that which overthrew the Shah of Iran in February 1979), particularly on the peripheral areas of capitalism. Such revolts will lead to crisis in the traditional bourgeois organisations, particularly those on the left like the Stalinists, Maoists and Trotskyists. These will follow their theory and merely act as the supporters of another type of capitalist exploitation - state capitalism. The wider the class movement, the more "radicalised" will be their response in an effort to control it, in order to lead it towards their type of capitalist domination. It is the fundamental task of communists to fight these counter-revolutionary forces inside the working class.

On the other hand the same social upheavals will give rise to new and immature political groups. Only a fully-convicted spontaneist could believe that these groups will spring into existence defending the communist programme in its entirety. It has taken long enough for communists in Britain to understand the nature of the failure of the revolutionary wave after the First World War - and we were not without the help of comrades in other European countries. It would be incredible to think that groups from peripheral areas (like the UCM), cut off from the European communist tradition, would be able to cut through the entirety of counter-revolutionary politics overnight. What attitude should European communists then adopt to these groups?

To begin with, it seems sterile to present the problem in terms of whether these groups break "class lines" on any issue. Apart from the fact that these groups have arisen in areas with no Left Communist tradition, where to possess a copy of Capital could mean instant death, communists in Europe have failed in over a decade to establish a cordon sanitaire between them and the bourgeoisie by this method. Clearly groups like this which are breaking from the counter-revolution will carry some of the hallmarks of leftist thinking. However, the social convulsions which give rise to them create a situation of movement in which, under the impact of events and the detailed criticism of communist tendencies, their initial positive steps can be pushed further.

Each case will have to be judged on its merits. We would obviously treat a tendency which is formed by announcing its adherence to a bourgeois force like the 4th International in the same way as existing representatives of that tradition. But in the case of less defined groups where movement or confusion (or both) is clearly discernible it is our duty to assemble detailed and

lengthy arguments against all the weak points of their Platform or Programme. If we fail to draw these groups into debate we will achieve nothing.

What is the alternative to this approach? Basically these can be summarised in two ways. There are those who maintain that these peripheral areas can be written off as places where communist groups can be established and therefore, by definition, any group which appears there must be counter-revolutionary. Then there are those who claim that as communism can be achieved spontaneously by the working class then communist minorities will be formed spontaneously in peripheral areas. Thus, for both these views any confused group which appears deserves only the briefest of denunciations whilst we wait for history to take its inevitable course.

We reject these approaches as idealist and undialectical. We reject too those childish spirits who have baited us as opportunist. We have made NO CONCESSIONS to the mistakes of these groups. What we have done is to address ourselves to the roots of their errors and to patiently research developed critical replies. This is not opportunism or selling out to the counter-revolution but the height of political responsibility. The process of criticism enables the class nature of an organisation to be revealed but there are no such processes in denunciations.

Finally, though it is not the purpose of this article to draw up a balance sheet of the debate with the SUCM, we wish to make it abundantly clear that the method we have adopted towards them is precisely the same method we shall adopt in all similar cases in the future. We will not be diverted from trying to gain the widest possible hearing for communist ideas in every area of the globe by the infantile jibes of "pure" sectarians.



Kurdish nationalist guerrilla
"There can be no solution to the misery and oppression of the Kurds without a victorious revolution of the proletariat of Iran."

Once again, by uncovering a little of the tangle of the political alliances and tools of the USSR, we discover the really shameless and sinister policy of the imperialist powers. Up until two months ago the "communist" party of Iran, the Tudeh, the direct and passive agent of the Kremlin, worked within the government forces of the Khomeini regime, while at the same

time Iranian Kurdistan was subjected to one of the most violent and bloody attacks of Khomeini's troops. (Now the fortunes of the Tudeh are over and its leader has been shot in the interminable struggles for power in Iran.) At the same time the USSR is intriguing with the Kurdish nationalist party and arming it against the Islamic regime. In short, it is taking the classical stance of one foot in either camp, ready to side with whoever emerges victorious.

The KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) is now part of the National Council for Resistance, which includes the bourgeois and petit bourgeois forces which are working for the replacement of the Islamic regime with a Democratic Islamic Republic. The purpose of the NCR, as is clear from its programme, is the suppression of the revolutionary movement and the continuation of the dominance of imperialist capital in the region.

And so the front of the forces that are preparing to manage a new bourgeois regime is spreading. In this case, what will happen in Kurdistan? Probably the administrative autonomy demanded by the influential Kurdish religious chief, Ezzedin Hosseini will be granted. The same sheikh declares:

"We want to speak our own language in addition to Farsi. Not only at home but in the offices and in the schools. We would want to manage our own regional economy according to our own demands, to choose our own local authority instead of having to accept that sent by a government, completely foreign to our culture and way of life."

Nothing so extraordinary or complex about that. Autonomy in economic management - what does it mean in reality? If, as has happened in Iraq, he is talking about leaving certain decisions concerning economic policies of capital in the region to the bourgeois and latifundia Kurds, there is nothing in the world to prevent a Hami Sadr, for example, from conceding it. But it is neither possible nor conceivable that a bourgeois Iranian government could concede to the Kurdish masses the possibility of deciding via mass organs the social and economic destiny of the region. Only a proletarian government, founded on the basis of the direct organs of power of the mass of workers and in the context of the proletarian dictatorship, could, by its very nature, "concede" to the Kurds the most complete parity of rights on this question, by means of its own process of centralisation. But this is exactly what the National Council of Resistance wants to avoid.

The backwardness, the poverty, the oppression of the Kurdish masses are both the conditions and the product of the domination of capital in Iranian society, analogous to the destruction of the economic fabric of the South during the capitalist unification of Italy. There can be no solution to the misery and oppression of the Kurds outside of a victorious revolution of the proletariat inside Iran.

And this is a crucial point for the communist movement, Iranian and international, which has not been fundamentally grasped - either in Iran or in the so-called European revolutionary "milieu". The same Komala which recognises in its documents some essential pledges, tends to forget them in its actual policies and in its perspectives for action. Komala writes the following (Resolution of 2nd Congress of March 1981):

"The proletariat is conscious that it cannot negate its destiny at one of the junctures and arenas of revolutionary democracy. The Kurdish resistance movement cannot ensure victory over the bourgeoisie in the sense of transforming the relations of production in the region of Kurdistan. The liberation of part of the proletariat in Kurdistan is not possible without connection with the whole proletariat in Iran". They must develop from here a policy of strict autonomy from the NCR, from the KDP, through effective preparation (in political cadres, in programmes, and in ways of relating to the masses of workers) for direct encounter with the forces of the bourgeoisie. What will happen if and when the Khomeini regime gives way to an Islamic Democratic Republic along the lines

of Bani Sadr and his NCR? What will happen if Komala remains more or less clearly demarcated from these forces? What will happen is that Komala will find itself forced to choose between a coherent support for such a regime or a dramatic change of course (always difficult, let's remember) with consequent loss of its mass following, involving at that point defeat and the dispersal of the organisation itself.

These are two equally distasteful but inevitable perspectives if Komala (and UCM which is preparing to unite with Komala in the Communist Party of Iran) does not quickly correct its political oscillation between denunciation of and collaboration with the KDP. For example, what sense can be made of what was said by the foreign spokesman for Komala in the English newspaper, *Kurdistan News and Comment* of May 1983. Ardalan says:

"Regardless of our differences with the KDP, we always insist in uniting our actions against the Islamic regime, in order to escalate the revolution. In the social and educational fields, the customs, the welfare of the people, in the field of hygiene, we have tried to co-operate with the KDP -Iran, but our offers have been rejected. Nevertheless in the field of military offensives we've held some joint operations."

Obviously here is an attempt to get mixed up on dubious grounds with a counter-revolutionary force like the KDP which hits back in the manner stated above. This is nothing but the consequence of a dangerous confusion in Komala's political and theoretical positions and forces us straight back to ask the questions we have asked in discussion with UCM and SUCM. It underlines the validity of the warnings given to the comrades of the SUCM.

"the deepening process of unification of UCM and Komala can become the basis of a regression on the part of UCM to the still largely "immature" positions of the Kurdish organisation".

We wrote that in May (*Battaglia Comunista* 10). Today a clearer profile is emerging of the danger of a regression to more openly opportunist positions■

SRAEL

Same Old Music New Conductor:

We are publishing here a brief article on Begin's resignation written by a CWO comrade in France. Since it was written its main themes have been confirmed.

The Israeli government is paralysed by the costs of the war. It pulled out of Beirut because it could no longer maintain the economic cost or the social cost of discontent in Israel.

The Israeli economy, despite US loans, is on the point of collapse with bank shares suspended on the stock market. The main currency, the shekel, is worthless and Israelis can no longer buy dollars (since they have been used up trying to support the shekel). In fact the Finance Minister, Aridor, who resigned because the rest of the government wouldn't accept his plan to replace the shekel with the dollar as Israel's unit of currency was only recognising the reality of Israel's economic dependence on the USA and inflation of 160% a year.

The main aim of the Shamir government though is to end index linking of wages to prices. But to do this the Israeli ruling class needs to reach agreement on how best to attack the workers. Shamir can either involve the Histadruth (the Israeli TUC) to get them to persuade workers to accept this cut or he could get a "national government" with the opposition Labour Party to impose it in "the national interest".

How the Israeli workers respond to this coming attack is of great interest to workers everywhere, since it could blow a hole through the wall of nationalist ideology for which thousands of workers have sacrificed for decades.

The argument that the resignation of Begin as Prime Minister last September was due to personal reasons isn't very convincing. The image of the "old warrior" retiring after having done his duty in the service of the fatherland is certainly an easy one but - beyond the gloss of the tributes paid to Begin by the world's rulers lies the gloomy picture of the insoluble contradictions in which the Israeli economy, like the rest of the world, is enmeshed. In fact, the expansionist policy carried on by the Israeli state for many years, especially from 1973 onwards, was just an attempt to escape the problems created by a disastrous internal situation. The various wars against Egypt and Syria were a means of deflecting the attention of the working people in Israel from existing difficulties onto the external "enemy" always threatening the country's "security": in order to break from encirclement by the hostile Arab world, the Israeli population was periodically asked to make greater sacrifices for the war effort of its own ruling class.

Far from solving Israel's internal crisis, the invasion of the Lebanon in 1982, just as was the case for previous wars, further weakened the Israeli economy. In spite of massive aid from the United States, despite the fact that Israel could dump its goods on the Lebanese markets and use local resources of the occupied areas, signs of deterioration have grown considerably. It is in this context that we must place the political change at the head of the Israeli state.

The first real tremor in the Israeli economy came as a direct consequence of the costly Yom Kippur War of 1973. In 1977 the GNP was stagnant, inflation was up to 30-40% and the trade deficit was growing rapidly (Israel needs to import most of its raw

materials). In October 1977 Begin announced new economic measures. These included a 10% devaluation of the Israeli shekel, a drastic reduction in state subsidies which maintain low food prices and a wage restraint policy which led to mounting struggles by the working class.

Despite these measures, the situation kept on deteriorating and inflation continued to rise, even going beyond the level of 100%. Then, the government changed its mind: after a period



Israeli Peace Protesters: Unless governments for peace become movements against capitalism, they cannot prevent war.

of reduced state spending it turned, in 1979, to a policy of increased state spending in order to stimulate demand. It was now felt that re-establishing subsidies for basic products would lead to greater consumption and thus higher state incomes. But this failed because growing demand led to an import surge with repercussions on the balance of payments deficit. Inflation was still 10% in 1981. It was then agreed that it was better to go back to the "good old method" of wage restraint and tax increases.

In 1982, while the media was hailing the war deeds of the Israeli army settling accounts with the Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon, the Begin government carried out its austerity plan: VAT increases, new taxes, the price of subsidised goods rose by 5% a month and the shekel was devalued. Instead of declining, inflation rose to 13%. In addition, a forced loan was created to pay for maintaining the Israeli army in Lebanon.

None of the measures taken have improved the situation of the Israeli economy: by the end of 1982 Israel's foreign debt reached 22 billion dollars and inflation was still at a high level (130%).

The cost of the war in Lebanon has dramatically worsened the situation of the working class in Israel. The strike of the EI Al workers last year showed that the local ruling class has not been able to mobilise workers behind the slogan of "national unity". This has been confirmed by desertions and demonstrations against the war. For the time being it is true that the Israeli working class has not emerged as a politically independent force, since the petty bourgeoisie has largely succeeded in transforming workers' resistance to sacrifices into a fight for "democracy", "peace", etc. But the growing deterioration in the material life of the working people in Israel will create the objective basis for a clear separation of interests between the existing classes. An essential contribution to this process of clarification will be the emergence of a revolutionary minority, which can link the condition of the Israeli working class and its struggles to the condition and struggles of all the oppressed people of the area, for a united fight against all bourgeois factions as part of the struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation on a world scale■

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LETTERS

The Law of Value

Dear Editor

In issue no. 12 you explained the Marxian law of value. I'm currently struggling with Marx's 'magnum opus', and I found your approach to the subject very effective. However, I'm stuck with a paradox.

If the total (value of) goods produced by society over a given period are sold at their value (value measured by labour time) and the total labour expended in their production is paid for its value as labour power (i.e. value of maintenance and reproduction of labour), then it follows that the value of goods produced is greater than the wages and salaries that go to make up purchasing power.

For example, let's say that total consumer output of society for a given period is T. Let T be subdivided into the following elements: value of constant capital Xc; value of wages/salaries Yv; value of surplus Zs. Then,
 $T = Xc + Yv + Zs$.

But the total purchasing power is only equal to Yv.

On the other hand, the portion of goods represented by $Xc + Zs$ have to be sold to realize any profit. Who is to buy these goods?

It would seem, prima facie, that capitalists, on the basis of the Labour Theory of Value, is an impossibility!

Where am I going wrong?

R.A. Manchester

Dear Comrade

Thank you very much for your letter explaining the paradox you have reached in your understanding of the law of value. We found the clear way you have posed your problem particularly interesting since the question you ask, "who is to buy these goods?" (i.e. the goods produced over and above the value of the workers' wages) is the same one as was asked by Rosa Luxemburg at the turn of the century! Luxemburg's answer was to declare that Marx was wrong in Volume II of *Capital* when he showed that capitalism created its own market. She went on to produce her own theory of accumulation based, not on the law of value, but on the sale of goods to pre-capitalist markets - i.e. she denied that capitalism could continue to exist in a situation where there were only capitalists and workers! As you say, if the law of value can't explain how the capitalists realise profits then theoretically capitalism cannot exist (or at least Marx's analysis and the law of value can be disregarded). But, as Bukharin pointed out in reply to Luxemburg, and as the CWO has explained to modern-day Luxemburgists (in *Revolutionary Perspectives*), there is nothing wrong with Marx's explanation of expanded reproduction in Volume II. The problem of how capitalism realises its profits is easily solved by the law of value once the importance of the total social product being divided into two departments of production is grasped. This is probably where you are going wrong.

If, like Marx, we divide the total social product (and therefore the total surplus value) produced in a given period into Department I, producing means of production (machinery, plant, etc.) and Department II, producing consumer goods, it is clear that there must be some exchange between the two departments for both the workers and capitalists to survive. The capitalists and workers in Dept. I can't consume machinery and plant, while on the other hand the capitalists in Dept. II can't replace their worn out equipment and install new machinery from the consumer goods produced in their own department.

If we break down the surplus value produced in both departments into that part which must

go to replace constant capital (c), the part that must replace variable capital or wages (v), and a surplus (s), the total social product can be shown as follows:

Department I $c + Iv + Is$

Department II $Iic + IIv + IIs$

For simple reproduction to take place - i.e. simply for worn out machinery to be replaced, for workers to be fed and clothed and for the capitalists to have enough to live from - some of the surplus value produced in each department must go to the other department.

Thus, the constant capital in Dept. I can be replaced from the surplus value produced in that Dept. But the variable capital (Iv) and the surplus (Is) in Dept. I are no good in the form of capital equipment; they must be exchanged for consumer goods from Dept. II. In Dept. II itself constant capital (Iic) cannot be replaced while the surplus value is still in the form of consumer goods; this must be exchanged for goods from Dept. I. Thus, so long as the surplus value exchanged between the two departments is equal, then capitalist relations reproduce themselves. Marx's formula for simple reproduction is therefore: $Iv + Is = Iic$. You can see there is now no problem about who is going to buy the goods destined to realise the constant and surplus capital. (Although Marx didn't deny that sporadic problems could and did occur because of imbalances between the two departments).

When Marx goes on to explain expanded reproduction (i.e. capitalist accumulation) the law of value still holds. This time we must not only divide the value produced in each department into $c + v + s$, but the surplus itself itself must be examined and divided into portion A which will be used for the capitalists' personal consumption and portion B which will be used for capital accumulation. Portion B can itself be broken into two parts - the first being the surplus value which will be accumulated as capital and the second the surplus value which will be accumulated as variable capital. Thus the surplus in both departments can now be shown as follows:

$Is = IA + IBc + IBv$

$IIs = IIA + IIBc + IIBv$

and the total social product can now be represented as:

Department I $c + Iv + IA + IBc + IBv$

Department II $Iic + IIv + IIA + IIBc + IIBv$

And since the surplus in both departments is initially in the form of capital and consumer goods respectively, there must be exchange between the departments as for simple reproduction. In other words, out of Dept. I's surplus, all the goods destined to provide variable capital for Dept. I and to be consumed by the capitalists of that department must be equal in value to the goods which are to provide the new constant capital for Dept. II (but which exist in the form of consumer goods before they are exchanged). Thus, $(Iv + IA + IBv) = (Iic + IIBc)$. In fact Marx's model of expanded reproduction shows that capitalist accumulation is a self-expanding process in which capitalism creates its own market.

We hope this brief explanation helps you to overcome the paradox you have encountered and that you will be able to go on and deepen your study of *Capital* and the law of value which alone can provide a convincing explanation for the present world economic crisis and capitalism's historic crisis as a mode of production.

Communist greetings

Unions and Plots

Comrades,

I received *Workers Voice* 12 ... a reading of other communist papers prompted me to go back over the ICC's "left in opposition" stance and their whole view of the function of the capitalist state etc. For them maybe the media's phrase of the 'lunatic left' isn't far short of the mark. Their general conspiracy theories are completely unnecessary to explain the workings of the state. It is not that the roles the trades unions, leftist and Labour parties, etc. have taken/been given that lead to their present functioning as supporters of capitalism and its state. For example, much is made of the trades unions sabotaging of workers' struggles and this is presented as the raison d'etre of the trades union movement. (Even you in *WV* 12 say that "... The aim of the march was to help sabotage the workers' struggle!"). The aim of the march was not to sabotage anything, although this was how it happened to function. The aim of the march was to strengthen a certain section of the capitalist class and this, in turn, was governed by the views of the trades unions and Labour Party, which by the role they have taken could only lead the workers further astray into beliefs in reformism. There is nothing machievellian about this. The trades union movement, within the limits set by its history, believes in reformism which in turn governs its possible options and thus leads it to support a certain section of the bourgeoisie, and in the end capitalism itself. Their vision of Utopia is only another version of capitalism. It is their belief in such ideas as the happy co-existence of the workers/bosses, "responsible" trades unionism and so on, and their functioning as "protectors" of separate sectors of the working class (a relic of the old Guild system) that is the real enemy of the working class - sabotaging the class struggle in effect but not by design. Or with the leftist parties, with their radical sounding phrases, which act as the left of capital, who do nothing but promote a view of a different sort of capitalism - slogans such as 'the right to work' (be exploited?) lead nowhere but, in the end, to a stronger capitalism. This isn't to deny conspiracies/machievellianism altogether. It's only too obvious in much of what happens in the ritual of pay bargaining, closed shops, workers on the board, the Labour Party using workers' struggles, but this is all only an ad hoc basis as the many different facets of the ruling class fight for supremacy amongst themselves. Grand conspiracies are unnecessary, capitalism is too strong, too all pervasive to need them.

Congratulations on *Workers Voice* 12. It was the most readable (accessible) yet. Keep it up.

K. Aberdenshire

Dear Comrade

Thanks for your letter. You're right to say that we mustn't confuse the objective anti-working class function of the trade unions with subjective intention on their part (i.e. by all their members). In general trade union members remain unaware that the unions' historical function as wage negotiators means that today (when the material pre-conditions exist for the dissolution of wage labour) they can only act against the interests of the workers. This is a difficult idea to get across in the abstract. However, the alternative isn't to put forward a simplistic picture of the unions acting as part of a general conspiracy by the ruling class. This won't help us to convince workers of the need to fight outside of the trade unions and, as you say, will only contribute to workers thinking that communists are lunatics.

We also agree with you when you say this doesn't mean we can't recognise that the unions' implicit support for the existing system leads them inevitably to deliberate sabotage of the working class struggle at crucial junctures. The point is surely, that revolutionaries have to struggle against

Continued on pg 8

Fake Union Militancy in French Postal Strike

7

We are publishing this letter from a CWO comrade who works in the French postal service. Not only does it highlight dramatically some of the ways in which the trade unions divide workers and the hostility with which they greet proposals for an effective fight, it also shows the need for revolutionaries to put forward alternative policies within each workplace. The fact that many workers will not listen to us at first is not so important. What is important is that communist workers stand out against the unions in the present day-to-day skirmishes with the bosses and provide a focal point for the growth of internationalist workplace groups which in turn will provide the basis for leading a real fight in the struggles which lie ahead.

Dear Comrades,

During the past three weeks I have been involved in the various stoppages at work. Some of them are still going on in the PTT (French postal service) in the Paris region.

First of all, it is necessary to stress the fact that not all postmen have struck. The movement has simply hit the sorting offices - those "on the roads" were ignored by the unions who wanted to avoid any national strike which could have threatened the government. Secondly the unions chose the most sectional aspects of the situation of the workers in the PTT (workplace problems), never mind the wage freeze of last year, the increase in taxes - the 1% tax on wages to finance job creation schemes, the 1% to fill the Social Security deficit, the 1% to finance deficits in the pension system. No mention of the fact that the increase in wages in 1982 and 1983 was not much the rate of inflation (there has been a 5% decline in the purchasing power of workers' wages this year in France).

Thirdly, action has been limited to token stoppages of 1 hour for each shift or half-shift, with the advantage for the unions that it was impossible to organise flying pickets to try to get support from other workers. Thus, workers were quite easily locked in the workplace, playing cards or football, or basking in the sun and leaving the unions a free hand to organise interminable rounds of negotiations with local bosses.

This kind of movement has hit almost every sorting office in France but not all at the same time. The Union view of how to struggle was quite well expressed by a Trotskyist (LCR) in an assembly in Lille when he said that success was dependent on 1) sending "communiqués" to the local press and radio stations to inform public opinion; 2) our capacity to negotiate; 3) eventually consulting trade unions in other workplaces about the possibility of extension and co-ordination of the movement.

From the start the unions tried to make this strike a conflict between sorting office workers and the local PTT administrator who was portrayed as an inflexible and reac-

tionary boss, not "open to dialogue". When the strike began in mid-September the unions wanted to limit action to 1 hour token stoppages at the end of the working time. But when negotiations did not appear to "progress" they decided on picketing (1 hour alternating pickets). Then the PTT opened another sorting office in the Lille suburbs towards which all mail was directed and threatened to introduce short-time working for those in Leszennes. Faced with this threat the unions sent a joint telegram to the PTT boss in Lille asking to re-establish normal 'traffic', and told workers that it was necessary to return to work in order to avoid a lock-out.



"... workers were quite easily locked in the workplace, playing cards or football, or basking in the sun and leaving the unions a free hand to organise interminable rounds of negotiations with local bosses."

I was able to intervene a lot in union meetings. I denounced the union manoeuvres, saying that 1 hour token stoppages and picketing are useless and that it was up to the workers themselves to decide on strike action if they wanted it. In fact the unions wanted above all to refurbish their tarnished image through a show of militancy in the context of elections to Social Security councils (run jointly by bosses and unions). Given the fact that their friends of the Socialist and Communist Parties are in power, they chose the most sectional problem to serve as a basis for agitation, that of "reduction" of the working week in the sorting offices from 38 to 37 hours.

But this was a trick, since the PTT administration wanted to reduce the working week through cutting of the time spent in getting to the job which was formerly included in the working time.

Thus, I explained that it was necessary to include current problems in the PTT in the context of attacks by the Left government against the working class. It was therefore important to link present problems to others faced by the working class as a whole in the form of tax increases, cuts in social services, productivity increases and lay-offs. We were not facing these attacks alone, as postmen. Only by such understanding was it possible to tie the struggle out of the workplace and try to establish links with workers elsewhere, not only those "on the roads", but also those of the tractor factory near Lille (Massey-Ferguson) facing the sack, or else those of the Thomson factory suffering continuous short-time working since the beginning of the year.

Obviously solidarity action could not be achieved through 1 hour token stoppages and passive picketing. It was necessary to either organise flying pickets to block the "scab sorting offices" on the outskirts, or else to get solidarity action from those "on the roads", since if they struck there would be nobody to distribute the mail. Once this was done there would be a need to co-ordinate action with other sorting offices; such a task could not be left in

the hands of the unions, it was up to the workers themselves to organise this and control it.

As usual, I was attacked by union stewards as a dangerous "terrorist", as a "Red" and they were followed in this by the majority of the workforce. Just a small minority shared my perspective. Having "democratically" decided on the practical aspects of the "strike", the unions led it easily to defeat, as was predictable and as I predicted from the start. After three weeks of stoppages they called for a return to work and the bosses have enforced their plans which will increase productivity, discipline, work loads per head. The unions claim to have won since the bosses promised 2 more days off than at the beginning. But it's not a victory at all since, given the compulsory character of these days off, smaller shifts will do the work of a normal one, in fact the result is an increase in exploitation, just as the bosses wanted.

However, now that work has begun again, some of the workers who followed the unions feel they have lost in reality and have vigorously criticised union stewards. This is just a first step, but they belatedly recognised that they had been trapped and locked in by union tactics. Last Thursday the unions were attacked by workers who said that they had agreed on proposals which were opposed to the interests and demands formulated by the workers. I added that picketing was not an end in itself: to go on strike means taking part in all sort of activity in the strike, it doesn't mean remaining passive and leaving control of the strike in the hands of the unions. It's useless to close the gates of your workplace when mail is being sent elsewhere and your workmates "on the roads" are distributing it. Further, any strike must seek solidarity from other workers in the public as well as the private sector. In the case of the PTT strike there was no co-ordination of the movement and the unions did their best to prevent any such thing. Thus, when Lille struck Amiens was working, when Amiens went back to work sorting offices in the Paris region and in Paris itself renewed strike action, a week after having been led back to work under pressure from the unions.

In short, I tried to draw the major lessons of the movement, giving political orientation to delineate working class interests from those of the unions, which are those of the bourgeoisie.

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● Continued from pg 7
trade unions inside the working class, and not just in terms of abstractions. We must be able to fight them on two fronts by:

a) exposing their sabotage (whether deliberate or not) and pointing to a practical alternative; b) undermining their outdated reformist ideas which permeate the working class and arguing instead for the revolutionary way forward.

It is too simplistic, and would discredit revolutionaries in the eyes of the working class, to turn this battle into a mere denunciation of a supposed plot on the part of the ruling class.

Glads you liked Workers Voice 12. We look forward to reading your comments on future issues

WORKERS VOICE

Unions Sabotage Workers' Fightback.

BOSSSES' ATTACK

BOSSSES ON THE ATTACK

1980 marked a turning point in the recent history of the British working class. With the defeat of the steelworkers the bosses and the state were able to force through massive redundancies, drastic wage cuts, productivity deals, and in some cases all three. Many workers, for instance, have been told that their firm has gone bust and that they are to be laid-off. Then they find that "their" factory has been taken over by a multinational corporation which will re-employ some of them in a "similar role" (i.e. their old job) for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the wages and longer hours (usually shift working).

There is no doubt that the bosses thought to go ahead with even more savage attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions. British Shipbuilders have tried to get by without giving workers pay rises for two years. Vauxhall offered only 5% a year after a nil wage rise last year. The National Coal Board has begun threatening miners that if they don't work harder their pits will close, whilst British Telecom has revived the bosses' old tactic of a lockout to try to defeat the telephone engineers' opposition to privatisation. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

WORKERS FIGHT BACK

What has surprised the bosses has been the fact that workers are no longer accepting these attacks as natural disasters. They are no longer listening when the bosses threaten them with the loss of their jobs. A great example here was at Sunderland Shipbuilders where 1,600 men went on strike because only some workers got a pay rise. The firm threatened them that if they didn't return to work then an order for the Falklands would be lost and they would lose their jobs. In addition to this threat went the old sob story that they were "unpatriotic" in not helping the "guys out there" (Guardian 11.10.83). To their eternal credit the workers realised that the "national interest" is the bosses' interest and remained unmoved by these appeals and threats. Similarly, at the modern Monkton Hall colliery near Edinburgh 1,500 men went on strike for a fortnight to show what they thought of NCB threats to sack 300 of them unless productivity improved. There have been a host of other struggles in recent weeks, from Nigg where workers at Highland Fabricators put up a fierce battle, down to London where British Telecom workers have been locked out by management. These struggles may as yet not amount to much, but in the context of the last three years they show that workers with their backs to the wall can, and will, fight back regardless of immediate consequences. Although strikes themselves won't lead to the downfall of capitalism, if workers didn't go on strike they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation". And as Marx went on to say, "By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement."

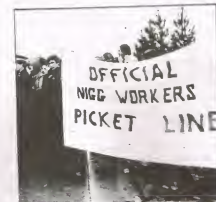
UNIONS AGAINST WORKERS

But to start any larger movement the working class will have to break out of the union prison. We haven't heard much about the unions in Britain recently. Now that the working class no longer thinks unions are public enemy number 1 and all we hear about is Len Murray advising the government on how best to keep the workers quiet. Murray recently informed us that "unions exist to prevent strikes" and the Observer (30.10.83) agrees:

"... union officials intervene in unofficial strikes to gain control of them and in response to the pleas of the employer who wants to reach a settlement."

In other words, as soon as workers begin to struggle then the unions stir themselves - to make sure things don't get out of hand. How unions work was shown in two different ways in the struggles of the Barnsley miners and the Vauxhall workers.

In the Barnsley coalfield 15 out of 16 pits and 15,000 miners came out in support of one worker who was transferred to another colliery after hitting a pit deputy. The strike lasted over a week and cost the NCB £7 millions. The so-called militant Yorkshire NUM area council



"...to start any larger movement, the working class will have to break out of the union prison..."

voted 67 votes to 3 to support the NCB and Jack Taylor (Scargill's chosen heir) was "unavailable" during the struggle. Meanwhile, the workers took the struggle into their own hands and when over 80 pickets turned up at South Kirby the NCB called on the police "to enforce Tebbit's Laws". The NCB was mystified.

"The Board could not understand the change of attitude among branches in the Barnsley area which had supported the decisions of their leadership for years." (Guardian 20.9.83)

In other words, the workers forced the bosses to backtrack by ignoring the union and showed that they are a long way from being "broken wretches". At Vauxhall it was a different story.

Whereas in Barnsley one pit had come out after another because pickets went round explaining the issues, in the Vauxhall struggle this didn't happen. To start with, 5 out of 6 workers voted for action in mass meetings round the country but then left the "struggle"

in the hands of the union negotiators. And whilst they waited the unions mobilised every tactic to demoralise them and weaken their resolve. First, the AUEW leader, Duffy appealed for a return to work and when this failed a secret ballot was carried out amongst 1,000 Dunstable lorry workers who accepted the firm's first offer. When this attempt to split the workers had little result and the workers had rejected two more offers, the stewards rigged the counting of the vote in the offer. This left many workers angry and shouting about a "sell-out".

THE WAY FORWARD

But such "sell-outs" are part of the unions' role. They exist to negotiate wages with the bosses. If capitalism didn't exist, if the wages system was abolished, unions would have no role to play. Thus unions always want to keep the struggle for wages in their hands. In fact it was noticeable how in the "unofficial" Barnsley strike the workers not only went against the union but soon came up against the forces of the state in the form of the police. Once this happens then a strike begins to question the rule of capitalism itself. The possibility of the "larger movement" which ~~Marx~~ spoke of exists. In the Vauxhall strike no such danger appeared because the unions kept the strike firmly under their control.

Now workers are, as individuals, beginning to realise that the union exists to take their dues in quiet times and to pop up in strikes to act as a hindrance to the growth of a real struggle. However, individual disillusionment leads nowhere. Only a continuous, collective fight against the unions on a daily basis will enable other workers to truly appreciate the fact that unions will always defend the "national interest" against their interests, will always negotiate away jobs and real wage increases. In the last resort they will mobilise to support imperialist war just as they did in 1914 and 1939. The fight against unions is therefore a political fight - and the weapon for this fight is the factory groups of internationalist communists. By joining or forming these workers will be able to:

1. provide a centre of constant activity against the unions where lessons from each struggle are remembered and passed on from factory to factory;
 2. formulate demands which, unlike those posed by the unions, will be able to unite all workers across sectional divisions;
 3. form political education meetings with other workers to develop political understanding and skill at intervening in mass meetings so that workers do not leave the struggle to union officials;
 4. understand that every strike contains the seed of a wider struggle against the capitalist system itself.
- All this leads to the building of an internationalist communist party - the workplace - to lead the fight to destroy capitalism for ever.

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WORKERS VOICE

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WORKERS
ORGANISATION**

NOV/DEC 1984
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MINERS STRIKE AT THE CROSSROADS

Each day that passes increases the significance of the miners' strike. The endurance, solidarity and combativity of the 130,000 miners on strike is inspiring the rest of the working class everywhere. Not only in Britain, where it has over 400,000 members, Leyland, Vauxhall, Ford and other workers to take up the fight against austerity, but from Japan to the United States. The miners' strike has inspired other workers. A victory for the miners, in temporarily pushing back the on-coming attack of the Tories, will encourage other workers to fight. Their defeat will make the bosses redouble their attacks. That is why the fight of the miners is the fight of the whole working class. The Tories have been in power for months, and really begins to bite, the bosses and government are beginning to panic. But as victory draws nearer, the Tories' increase, so too do the dangers facing the working class.

The increasing effectiveness of the strike was already worrying the bosses, before the miners' union could even begin to plan. The slashing of the price of oil by the government, and the dramatic fall in the value of the dollar, brought about a sharp rise in the first time the ruling class had that, for the first time since the war, the miners' strike and above was losing confidence in the ability of the government to back down to defeat the miners. The effects of the economic crisis on the pit men have ended all coal production, hastened the depletion of stocks, and increased the cost of living for the masses. The plant and machinery. From the beginning MACRO was desperate to avoid a strike, and finally decided to make a deal with the miners. But instead of its members would over-ride their class loyalty. In this it has acted like the other ruling class organizations, and the result has ensured the miners isolation. While removing the imminence of a crunch in the coal supply, the deal has also ended the increasing coal imports will be enough to avoid a crisis in power generation over the winter, and has also allowed the ruling class to open-cut miners to ban coal movements.

New Dangers:

From Within and Without

Despite all the talk by government ministers of coal stocks lasting throughout the winter and power cuts being unlikely, it is clear that the government and coal board have one option open to ensure a defeat of the miners on the scale envisaged when Cortonwood was closed. That is the option to move pithead coal stocks in the first instance to the power stations. This is the meaning of the sudden police action in stopping miners in Yorkshire selling pithead coal

to sustain the strike. And while it was possible to maintain a steel works such as Ravenscroft by convoys of coal lorries from private firms, keeping the power stations open could only be done by a large scale military operation. Preparations are undoubtedly being made for this eventuality, possibly concentrating on key stations, so that a symbolic defeat is inflicted on the miners to sap their morale. At that point the question of victory or defeat will be in the balance.

In that context the crucial issue will be for the miners to appeal directly to the power workers not to handle coal, in addition to not increasing electricity output from oil and gas and nuclear fuel. Indeed, the latter demand should already have been made, as a significant increase in generation from these sources has already taken place, with the blessing of the strike-breaking ESWU. Mass picketing of the power stations will be necessary to enforce this demand, but it needs to be accompanied by active appeals for solidarity and generalization of the struggle. As we said in a recent leaflet on the strike:

No amount of militant fight by the miners alone will defeat the bosses, who have reaped the whole of the benefit of the capitalist state. The miners have to have support from the other workers. They have spent more on defeating the miners, and turned whole regions into lawless lawless police states. The key to victory lies in the unity of the struggle to other sections of the working class. The miners need support. The miners need more active help, like the support given by some of the dockers over moving scab coal to Germany, or the London printworkers who stopped production for the day after the attacks on the miners.

The miners need the support of the other workers in their own struggle. But for to launch their own struggles, to open up new fronts in the fightback, and to link these to the struggles of the miners through joint picketing, demonstrations, and so on. The workers are facing the same problems as the miners, the same problems of the wages, inferior conditions of work, and so on.

Any attempt to generalise and unite the struggles leads to a conflict with the trades unions, which divide the workers section by section, and restrain any struggle within the bounds acceptable to capitalism. Thus the TUC has passed meaningless motions in support of the miners, which are designed to leave them ISOLATED. The ISTC has openly supported the use of police-escorted coal convoys.

And the ESUW has indicated that it will call upon power workers to "work on" to defeat the miners. "Communist Party" stalwart McGahey says NOTHING while millions of tons of Polish coal floods into east coast ports, to ease the debts of crisis-ridden Polish state capitalists. Scargill, too, is playing a double game: class struggle talk on the one hand, while on the other channelling the strike into a crusade for the return of a Labour government, hand in hand with Bevan.

Workers, don't forget that Sam closed more pits from 75-79 than MacGregor, and that he was also responsible for the infamous productivity deal of 1977, which divided miner against miner, and led to today's scabbing by the Notts. miners. The NUM forced this through AGAINST the results of a ballot by the miners. The Labour Party, trades unions and "Communist" Party stand exposed as the LEFT WING of CAPITALISM, fighting NOT for socialism, but for STATE CAPITALISM."

Violence and the Struggle

The role of the unions in hamstringing the class struggle has been shown in their attitude to the question of violence. Realising that to oppose violence would simply lead to its generalisation the NUM leadership have instead recuperated it through their apparent endorsement of it. In our last issue we noted and welcomed the increasing violence displayed by the miners, and hailed their break with legality as a great step forward.

"Over the past weeks we have seen the miners abandoning the tired, useless framework of trade union "legality", and engaging in guerrilla actions which are embryonic civil war...Commando groups have been organised to bomb lorry depots carrying coal blacked by railmen, and NCB property has been systematically destroyed... In many pit villages attacks on police stations have been organised, of which the near insurrections at Fitzwilliam and Maltby were only the most spectacular...

The miners in their increasing use of organised class violence are pointing the way towards civil war, and their actions are to be welcomed. Communists must call for their intensification and generalisation."

But the essence of a communist intervention is to develop and adopt tactics as the strike develops, to emphasise at particular points what the key issues are, and to formulate a strategy for carrying the struggle forward. To simply repeat abstract platitudes at all points of the strike, regardless of the dynamic of the struggle itself, is only moralising. Thus we see that the situation is

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Editorial US ELECTIONS

DEMOCRACY PREPARES AUSTERITY

This month sees the myth of democracy enacted in its most odious form, in the shape of an American presidential election, with all the ruses and phillies that accompanies this most transparent of all electoral circus. Once again the American masses are called upon to acquiesce, as elected citizens, in their own exploitation and the preparations for their own destruction. For, whoever wins the election, the U.S. ruling class will continue with their attacks on the living standards of the American workers, and with their relentless drive towards war. And all this will be legitimised as the 'will of the people' by the electoral charade.

In the likely event of the re-election of Reagan and the Republicans, the U.S. will continue in its policy of military preparation and armed confrontation with the real or supposed surrogates of Russian imperialism in Central America, the Middle East and elsewhere. Simultaneously, however, the present U.S. policies of high interest rates and high budget deficits would lead to repercussions that could shatter the cohesiveness of the U.S. bloc, by disrupting several of its members, as we outlined in detail in IV 17, in 'The Crisis of Finance Capitalism'. Despite the election rhetoric then, the post election period will see deflationary measures pursued, by means of tax increases and a rise in unemployment. A similar economic policy would be pursued by the Democrats, but they would seek to cement the Western alliance and outflank the Russians by trying to build 'democratic' agents of U.S. imperialism while still, as did the Carter administration, carrying out re-armament. The political parties in the election thus represent different factions within the U.S.

ruling class, and are of no importance-except as manoeuvres to be exposed-to the U.S. working class.

One fact that is significant and positive, is that more than in any other country, elections in the U.S.A. are largely a middle class affair. The polls seldom top 50%, and the rate of abstentionism amongst workers, both black and white, is enormous. But realisation that both parties are parties of millionaires, and that the political system is rotten, is still far removed from the positive awareness of the need to destroy the state, including its "democratic" apparatus, and to create an alternative, working class state. Despite the brief appearance of Soviets in many American cities (notable Seattle) in the great flights of 1971-2, and despite its quite unparalleled history of violent economic battles, the U.S. working class remains devoid of class consciousness. This is a living proof, as was the history of the British working class in the nineteenth century, that economic struggles, though preparing the ground for, do not themselves produce, class consciousness. The weight of the U.S. proletariat, which accounts for around 40% of the world's industrial output, in any worldwide class movement needs no expatiating; what does is the urgent need to create a communist vanguard in America.

In the meantime, the real conflict in U.S. society continues, with strikes emerging in the coal and auto industries. The increasing attacks that will be made on living standards in the U.S. will provide the basis for wider struggles, and the possibilities of revolutionary intervention, hastening the day when the whole barbaric political superstructure of American capitalism can be destroyed, along with its economic foundations.

BRITISH MINERS (cont. from page 1)

regard to the violence has altered, and the NUM has largely recuperated this, just as it recuperated flying pickets. The NUM has turned violence into ritualistic confrontations with the police at points of lesser importance. Thus, during the second dockers strike, we saw thousands of pickets confronting one or two miners returning to work, instead of being directed to those docks where there had been no strike. Real workers' violence continues, eg. at Grimsby, where police have been attacked for their reign of terror in the village. But the suppleness of the NUM, in controlling the miners, whose loyalty it retains, has once again been demonstrated.

The majority of the striking miners still see the strike as a "miners affair", and tightening as the key to victory. While they welcome sympathy action, they do not see the need for generalisation, not seeing that 1958 is not 1974, and conditions today are less favourable to the miners. However, a militant minority exists which wants to fight in a more violent way, and sees, confusedly, the need to broaden the struggle despite the illusion that the NUM leadership shares their perspectives. It is this group which can and must go directly to other workers, especially power workers, to spread the struggle, and it is through their actions that the possibility of breaking from union control can emerge. And just as it was not necessary for such a minority to have the sanction of elected strike committees to carry out the violence, neither is it necessary for them to operate under such formal methods of organisation to spread the strike. Indeed, in present conditions, elected strike committees would simply dilute the most advanced workers into a passive majority, and fall under indirect NUM control. The "formal" break with the union cannot come until the political conditions for it exist. These political conditions are maturing, as the NUM, having made the withdrawal, remains in control of the strike. It will be hard for the NCB and the NUM to concoct a scheme to get an orderly return to work, after having struggled so long, the miners will not settle for the NCB closure scheme, modified and disguised as a victory. But the intervention of AGS, and the possibility, already floated in the NACORE talks, of an "Independent" review body for dealing with pit closures, offers one possibility for a NCB/NUM deal. After this, pits could be picked off one by one, with the likelihood of another massive response by the miners lessened. As the strike nears an end, the demands of the workers will change, to a rejection of any AGS 'review' body, to the sacking of scabs, withdrawal of criminalisation and sacking of miners, and to a scrapping of the infamous 1975 productivity deal. At the moment, however, the main priority of the strike is to direct all available resources to the power stations.

Whether the struggle wins (by which we mean temporarily halts the bosses onslaught on the class) or is defeated, the real gains will be in the alteration of the balance of forces it has wrought in Britain, and in whether the political lessons on the role of the state, and the role of the trades unions, as well as the question of the organisation of future struggles, are assimilated by the most advanced elements of the class.

COMMUNIST REVIEW

CONTENTS

- Where we have come from and where we are going
- Platform and Statutes of the Bureau
- On the formation of the Communist Party of Iran
- Crisis and Imperialism

Organ of the International Bureau
for the Revolutionary Party
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No. 1, Summer 1984

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Due to meetings on the miners strike in Motherwell and Burnley the October Glasgow meeting on the Iran-Iraq War was postponed. We apologise for any inconvenience. This meeting: THE IRAN - IRAQ WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS will now be held at the beginning of December. Contact Glasgow for details and watch for local advertising.

Regular readers meetings also take place in Northern England to discuss our publications. The next meeting will be in LEEDS on Wednesday Nov. 21st at 8.00 p.m. in Leeds Trades Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7.

For meetings in the London area contact our London address.

positions of the C.W.O.

* Every country in the world today is capitalist - including the so-called Communist states (for example Russia and China).

* Trade unions and shop stewards cannot defend the interests of the working class.

* The struggle for communism cannot be waged through Parliament, but must be carried out through workers' councils with recallable delegates.

* The working class can only come to power through the creation of its own political party: the international communist party.

* The capitalist system is in crisis and irretrievable decline. It can only offer inflation and unemployment and it cannot be reformed. The only choice for the future is war or revolution.
BARBARISM or COMMUNISM

انقلاب دموکراتیک

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APPEAL FUND

The deepening of the crisis and the corresponding aim of communists to deepen their interventions in the working class, means an increasing burden on the financial resources of the C.W.O. We are totally dependent on the contributions of our members, supporters and sympathisers, practical and financial.

We appeal to our readers to help us in any way they can. Any donations, large or small, will help maintain and broaden our work.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ASTURIAS SOVIET

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago the miners of the Asturias rose against the Spanish Republic in a massive display of proletarian self-organisation and insurrection. In the title we "bow" to their "navoir" draw the lessons for the coming wave of class struggle

The First World War which began in 1914 exposed the capitalist nature of the so-called "civilised" parties of Europe as they rushed to find reasons why workers should kill each other in defence of their "own" imperialist masters. However the Spanish etata managed to avoid entering this conflict and thus the Spanish Socialist Party (the PSOE) and the anarcho-sindicalist movement (CNT) were not once revealed as anti-proletarian bodies. In the case of the PSOE leader became Minister of Labour and after collaborated with the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (under whom the PSOE leader became Minister of Labour) and after they had formed an alliance with the petite of the leaders of Spanish capitalism (the second ranked Socialist, Prieto, was himself a millionaire) to form the Spanish Republic in 1931. But even when they were in power and called out troops to massacre a patriotic millenarian uprising by destitute anarchist labourers at Cieza Vieja in 1933 they kept their working class base in Spain, at least where workers illusions in the old parties remained. Cieza Vieja led to the collapse of the first coalition government of the Republic and the PSOE, like all labour parties in opposition tried to control its working class base by becoming more "critical" in its rhetoric. During 1934 the PSOE founded local "workers alliances" with other left-wing organisations in an attempt to blot out the memory of its record in government. The highpoint of these radical words came when the CEDA, a right wing party which had not taken an oath of allegiance to the Spanish Republic looked as though it might get the government. The government of the PSOE leader now threatened an insurrection if this did happen. But the Workers Alliance did not prepare for armed struggle. No arms were distributed, no militias formed and no plans for fraternisation with the "quintessence" to be made. Thus when the CEDA did enter the government the bluff of the PSOE was called. Largo Caballero called a general strike but gave no warning the government 48 hours to prepare. However the Madrid working class took to the streets immediately on the same day, hoping that the PSOE's vague promises of arms would be fulfilled. By Oct.12th the Spanish capital had been paralysed for 8 days but the PSOE had still done nothing. On October 13th they called for a return to work claiming a victory (all that had happened in Madrid was the arrest of Largo Caballero). And in this way the CNT did little more despite the fact that the workers had spontaneously raised barricades in the streets. For the anarchists this was just a political strike and nothing to do with them. In this fashion the CNT also played its part in isolating the Asturian workers.

THE ASTURIAN SOVIET

Only in Asturias where the control of the so-called political leaders of the working class wasn't so strong did the combativity of the workers find real expression. Armed at first only with sticks of dynamite the miners of the Northern region captured the barracks of the Civil Guard (the armed police) and distributed their arms. Taking as their slogan "N.P., which means United Proletarian Brothers workers of all political factions: men conquered all the mining villages seizing 30,000 rifles in the process. In one place, Le Faigueira, the miners even built armoured cars and bomb throwing machines to make up for the shortage of rifles and ammunition. With these the whole of Asturias, including the main part of Oviedo, fell to the miners by October 7th.

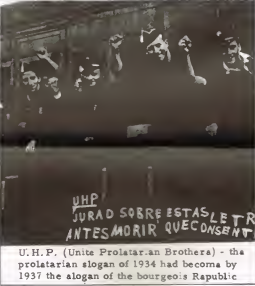
It was a genuine proletarian movement which went beyond the bourgeois manoeuvres of the PSOE.

"Through its very movement, the action of the proletariat destroyed the State institutions and

capitalist ownership. Power was based on local workers' committees, with the aid of the armed proletariat, and ownership was generally redistributed without any kind of formalities." (G. Neri *Alfonso de demora: promesa de victoria* p.157. [OO translation])

Unable to use the conscripts of the Spanish regular army, the Madrid Government resorted to a 40,000 strong force of Franco's Foreign Legion and Moorish Troops. Despite its artillery and brutality (all prisoners were shot on capture) this force could only make rapid progress in the coastal areas. In the mountain passes of Asturias the miners held firm.

And just as the Socialist leaders in Madrid was betraying the struggle they had called for so too did the Asturian socialist deputies desert the working class. Having learned from Madrid that there would be no general rising, these socialists quickly told the Asturian workers to lay down their arms and then escaped, leaving the workers to their fate. The workers, however, re-elected their revolutionary committees which were now "made up of the most advanced of the Asturian proletariat"(Nami) instead of the Socialist time servers. The unequal struggle between the miners and Franco's troops lasted another week until the miners began to run out of ammunition and it became clear to the workers that nowhere else in Spain



U.H.P. (Unite Proletarian Brothers) - the proletarian slogan of 1934 had become by 1937 the slogan of the bourgeois Republic

had other workers initiated their actions. In the face of this isolation the delegates of the Provincial Committee of the Asturian workers signed a truce with the local army commander Lopez Ochoa. Despite this agreement the revenge wreaked by the "army of order" in Asturias was amongst the most barbaric in a decade of barbarous acts.

"The agreement between Lopez Ochoa and the Provincial Committee by which he first promised to occupy the mining districts with the Moorish regulars and the Foreign Legion in the rear-guard was formally respected but the atrocities went on increasing day by day. The Civil Guard added its contribution by carrying out assassinations on mass. Just as in the Middle Ages military leaders allowed their mercenary troops the right of sack in cities which resisted, so the reaction allowed its mercenaries free rein to pillage, right of assassination, and including the right of violation. Whole families, from the sea-born to grandmothers were completely exterminated. In fact, of men were tortured and beaten to death by the "army of order". Hundreds were murdered and clandestinely buried." (RHP)

In all nearly 5,000 workers were murdered and a further 30,000 were imprisoned and tortured. The PSOE leaders were soon arrested but Largo Caballero's false reputation as "the Spanish Lenin" was fabricated when he was given a 30 year prison sentence that he was never expected to serve.

Until the final victory of the international socialist revolution all struggle of the working class are in some sense or other defeats but the defeat of the Asturian miners

went beyond the physical slaughter of the workers.

Had the crushing of the Asturian October led to the political exposure of the anti-revolutionary character of the PSOE, CNT and also the Spanish Communist Party (PCP) then the dead would not have died in vain. Unfortunately the events not only gave the PSOE leaders the undeserved crown of martyr but even saw the beginnings of the formation of the Popular Front government that was elected in February 1936. What had been a workers alliance aimed at setting up a Soviet republic in 1934 now became part of the policy of Soviet imperialism which, in its aim to get an alliance with Britain and France, called upon workers to "defend democracy" from the fascist menace. Thus the Asturian miners of 1934 who had fought against the capitalist Republic found themselves in 1936 taking up arms again - this time in its defence! Defence of democracy replaced the struggle for socialism and in this sense the Spanish Civil War from 1936-39 became a dress rehearsal for the 2nd World War since "defence of democracy" was what the anti-Hitler alliance of Britain, Russia and the USA also used to win the workers to another imperialist butchery from 1939-45.

Today the working class throughout the world is not under the direction of false socialist leaders as it was in 1914 or 1934. But neither has it found its own expression of its growing awareness of the bankruptcy of capital. And the chief lesson of Asturias is that without an independent proletarian organisation workers are led into a struggle in which, despite their heroism and capacity for self-organisation, they cannot escape from the clutches of bourgeois politics. Such an organisation, in 1934, would have based its perspectives on the bourgeois political crisis which existed and put forward a proletarian response. This would have been to expose both the "anti-fascism" of the PSOE and the non-political abstentionism of the CNT, and to have called for solidarity action of all Spanish workers with those of the Asturias. Communists do not ignore the political crises of the bourgeoisie such as that which preceded Asturias, nor do they turn their backs on movements which begin with the working class under the domination of bourgeois forces. On the contrary they use the space opened up by these crises and movements to mobilise for a genuine class response and the transformation of the movement from an anti-capitalist one. Asturias '34 shows, on a small scale, that this is possible, given a communist presence in the working class.

In the 1930s the workers in Spain were isolated from the rest of the working class in Europe which had been physically crushed in its great struggles of the previous decade. Today, from Poland to Peru, the international working class is beginning to break from the long nightmare of those defeats and it is beginning to create genuine communist organisations all over the world. The international unification of those forces and their increasing influence within the working class are essential if bourgeois ideology in its thousand forms is to be crushed. Only thus can the glorious future glimpsed by the Asturian miners be turned into reality.

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CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

Communists aim to create a classless and stateless society in which the familiar tools of class violence such as the police, the judiciary and the army will no longer exist. However, communists also recognise that such a society can only be built once the present society is destroyed; the change from the present capitalist society to a communist one necessarily involves violent revolution in which many lives will be lost.

"A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part, by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, - authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries." (Engels, On Authority Selected Works p.699)

People often ask, "Why is it that this change cannot be accomplished peacefully using the existing so-called democratic institutions of capitalist society such as parliament?" There are two main reasons why communists cannot come about through parliament - the first concerns the nature of democracy in capitalist society, and the second concerns the development of workers consciousness under conditions of capitalist domination.

Democracy and Capitalism
Present day society consists of two main classes who face one another as deadly enemies, the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class lives on the surplus which it extracts from the workers, a surplus which it gets hold of by means of the capitalist relations of production. The totality of these relations of production, such as wage labour, commodity production, division of labour, trade etc constitute the "economic structure" of society. It is on this foundation that the political and legal superstructure of society is erected. Democracy is simply one of a number of political superstructures which can be erected on the capitalist economic foundation, and it is this foundation which must be changed before any real change can occur in society. The economic structure of all countries in the world today is capitalist. However, the political and legal superstructures vary according to differences in the details of these relations of production as well as historical and social factors. Certain countries, notably those of Western Europe and North America, have democratic systems which are a reflection of their economic strength, while others such as in South America or Africa, have military dictatorships which are a reflection of their economic weakness, their domination by the industrially advanced countries and the consequent violent character of the class struggle. Russia and Eastern Europe have party dictatorships, which are again a reflection of their economic weakness and their historical

evolution. All these political forms are, however, based on capitalist relations of production and express the rule of the capitalist class over society. The state and its appendages, whether military or parliamentary, are instruments of class rule, and the idea of using such as instruments of class emancipation are ludicrous.

Capitalist Dictatorship
In the case of the naked military dictatorships such as those of South America it is perfectly obvious that we are dealing with the dictatorship of the capitalist class over the workers, but this is no less true in the case of democracies such as Britain. The democratic superstructure is based on capitalist exploitation of the working class just as strictly as the military dictatorship. Democracy in capitalist society is simply an elaborate masquerade for the dictatorship of the capitalist class. The capitalist class pretend that the reason we have capitalism in Britain is because the people have democratically decided on it, or at least have decided not to change it. This is a ridiculous lie, and in reality democracy is simply another weapon in the capitalist arsenal which they use against the working class.

Parliamentarism developed as the political representation characteristics of bourgeois society in its classic phase. But Marxists realise that "democracy" and the granting of the franchise to all "citizens" does not prevent the organs of the state constituting a machine for the defence of the capitalist class nor does it prevent the state from being a weapon of the bourgeoisie against the working class. To argue otherwise would be to deny the determination of the political superstructure of society by the relations of production which characterise its foundation, i.e. to deny Marxism.

Communists argue that a new form of state power must be created in the revolutionary process - proletarian soviet power. This is in essence anti-democratic, since not only the bourgeoisie and their hirelings, but also the petty bourgeoisie are deprived of political rights. This new form of state, which Marx felt was the Commune state - "The political form at least discovered under which can be worked out the economic emancipation of labour" - we now know to be the Soviet state, based on the experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 in Russia. Democratic ideas are dangerous, since they spread the illusion that socialism can be achieved peacefully by ballot box manoeuvres, and weaken the resolve of the proletariat to deal with the opponents of socialism by depriving them of political rights.

Nor can the working class express its identity as a class via the ballot box atomised as separate "citizens" amongst other citizens, the worker votes as a bourgeois individual, subject to the dominant organs of the fabricators of ideas in capitalist society (media, press, pulpit etc). The proletariat can only express itself as a class through class action, such as strikes, mass meetings, picketing etc. And as the bourgeoisie will know, and show by its hysteria, these actions are "anti-democratic". The working class shows its identity through anti-ballot box action, by abstention, by boycott and finally by attacks on and destruction of bourgeois parliamentarianism and the whole myth of representation by corrupted individuals who are beyond any control by the working class.

"It is necessary to shatter the bourgeois lie according to which every clash between opposing political parties, every struggle for power, must necessarily take place

within the democratic mechanism, that is through elections and parliamentary debates. We cannot succeed in destroying that lie without breaking with the traditional method of calling on workers to vote in elections side by side with members of the bourgeoisie and ending up in a situation where the delegates of the proletariat act on the same parliamentary ground as the bourgeoisie." (Theses on Parliamentarism of the Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920) - in Revolutionary Perspectives 2 p.v.)

Capitalist Savagery
Over the last 100 years the capitalist class has shown with horrifying clarity the savagery to which it resorts when the real basis of its dictatorship over society is threatened. It will fight tooth and nail to maintain its privileges even when this means the destruction of civilisation built up over hundreds of years. From the butchery of the Paris Commune to the massacre of revolutionaries in Germany and Italy to the suppression of the more recent workers struggles such as those in Hungary and Poland, it is evident that the capitalists will never give up the power until they are militarily crushed. To imagine that the basis of present society could be changed by elections in parliament is simply to indulge in childish dreams - dreams which are innumerable today.

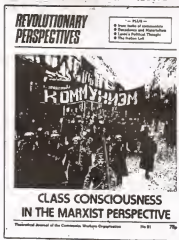
Marx and Engels in the 1840s imagined that the workers could in certain countries use the democratic institutions of capitalism to gain power, and in the Communist Manifesto they speak of the proletariat winning the "battles for democracy". In this they were mistaken and corrected themselves. Engels wrote in the preface to the English edition of the Communist Manifesto (1888):

One thing especially is proved by the Commune, that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."

Marx himself, in his study of the events of the Paris Commune recognised that the Commune could not have survived at all without the destruction of elements of the capitalist state such as the police, judiciary and standing army and criticised the communists for leaving intact sections of the state such as the banking system. In his critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx expressed this most clearly:

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

It is therefore necessary for the capitalist state machinery to be destroyed and for the working class to construct their own state machinery in order to effect the transition to classless society. It is this workers state which withers away as classes disappear and society approaches communism. However, the destruction of the capitalist state power necessarily entails violence. "But," people ask, "why couldn't the army and police who consist of members of the working class simply refuse to support the capitalists causing bourgeois power to collapse?" Such a deflection of capitalism's hirelings, who are armed mercenaries and retainers, not proletarians, could only take place in the course of revolution. This brings us to the



ECONOMICS MARXISM

second main reason why the democratic institutions of capitalism couldn't be used for taking power and constructing communism peacefully, the majority of the working class are dominated by capitalist ideas and will remain so while capitalism continues to function.

Formation of Ideas
Marxists are materialist and recognise that the ideas of classes are in the last analysis a reflection of the material world which they perceive through practice. In a similar way the social ideas or social consciousness of the class is derived from the economic structure workers perceive in material life. Things which appear normal to most people today such as working for wages and exchanging their food and clothing and housing would have appeared quite extraordinary to people in feudal times or in the earlier period when production was based on slavery. As Marx wrote,

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence which determines their consciousness."

Ideas have an historical dimension. Conceptions are conditioned by what has occurred in the past as well as by the social conditions we experience in the present. The social ideas in society are therefore based on the productive relationships which constitute the economic structure of society and the interpretation of these relationships which is present in society. This interpretation is inevitably that of the ruling class. This meant, as Marx clearly stated in "The German Ideology" that within class society,

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas..."

Thus in general the ideas of the ruling capitalist class will be the dominant ideas amongst the working class. Such a conclusion is a self-evident result of a materialist understanding of society. The majority of the working class cannot escape the domination of capitalist ideas which are more than a man's shadow. For Marx only the school of revolution could break the hold of capitalist ideas over the majority of the working class:

"Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." (*German Ideology*)

Therefore, even if parliament were an institution on able to change society (which it is isn't), it would not be possible for the majority of the working class to achieve communist con-

sciousness and vote for the establishment of communism. Parliamentary elections can at best measure the extent of the intellectual domination of the capitalist class over the workers. The parliamentary road to socialism is therefore a utopian dream.

To argue, as certain socialists do, that if one worker can be converted to socialism so can a majority is to retreat from the historical materialism of Marx, which understands society in terms of classes based on relations of production, to the bourgeois materialism of the capitalist class. Such materialism starts not from the study of classes, but from the single individual and generalises from this starting point to society at large. Society, however, does not consist of single "free" individuals and so all the conclusions based on this method of argument are false.

Communist Consciousness

Although, in general, the working class will be dominated by the ideas of the capitalist class this domination can never be total. Capitalist society is founded on class antagonisms which lead to class war. These are material conflicts which the working class experiences in its daily life and which directly contradict the ideas of the capitalist class. They form the basis for communist ideas or communist consciousness. Communists understand and interpret the events of the class struggle in the light of the class's historical evolution, its historical attempts to liberate itself from capitalist oppression and its future role in the creation of communism. The raw material of the class struggle is actively restructured in the light of the historical materialist understanding of society. The communist consciousness so produced is in total contradiction with the dominant capitalist interpretation of events in society. However, while capitalism continues to function this consciousness will only be achieved by a minority of the working class. This consciousness does not, however, mean (as the parliamentary socialists maintain) that communism is impossible.

Communist Revolution

To achieve communism it is necessary for the minority who understand the true nature of present society and the need for communism to give a lead in the battles of the working class. Although they will remain a minority until the period of actual collapse of the capitalist structure, by giving a political and practical lead in the material battles of the working class they will be able to draw broad masses under the communist banner. The politicisation of these masses will proceed in step with their practical struggle and will become easier as the lies on which the capitalist ideas are based become exposed in practice. It is not necessary for a majority of workers to understand the communist programme before the decisive battles for communism and the destruction of capitalism are entered. These battles will themselves provide the soil for the growth of communist consciousness and a massive strengthening of the communist forces. It will however be impossible to construct communist society without the active participation of the majority of the world's workers. This does not mean that formal marxists are required in every country but an overall majority in the capitalist heartlands is required. This majority can be achieved during the process of revolution itself. This process will, of course, expose today's parliamentary democracy as simply camouflage for capitalist dictatorship which will be swept into the dustbin of history.

Debate with S.P.G.B.

MARXISM OR IDEALISM?

One of the tasks of a revolutionary organisation is to expose and undermine ruling class ideas which exist inside the working class under the guise of socialism. Thus on 27th October the CWO confronted the well-intentioned "socialists" of the SPGB (Socialist Party of Great Britain) who imagine that achieving socialism is simply a matter of persuading a majority of workers of the virtues of a classless, moneyless, stateless society in the future.

For our part our speakers pointed to the non-Marxist and idealist basis of the SPGB's politics which prevent them from understanding anything about the process of revolution and the material basis for the growth of socialist consciousness in the working class. Since the SPGB sees the problem in idealist terms: i.e. as a question of spreading knowledge, they can only ignore the objective circumstances which force the working class as a class to confront capitalism and to seek an alternative. "The crisis - What crisis?" "The possibility of collapse?" For the SPGB stalwarts nothing could be more amusing.

The CWO pointed to the evidence of history to condemn the SPGB's evolutionist scenario of socialism coming about through a democratically elected majority in Parliament with the capitalist class meekly handing over power to their class enemy when this 'socialist' parliament withdraws grants to the army! For the SPGB the lesson of the Paris Commune has gone unheeded, while the fact that the ruling class has lived for over a century of universal suffrage and the ballot box without the smallest sign of the working class winning control of parliament (never mind the state) tells them nothing.

When tackled by us as to how the working class will achieve socialism in their scheme of things the SPGB were dishonest. Instead of defending their view of socialism via the ballot box, they announced that Parliament was only one of many possible ways - soviets could be another! Given their oft published view that policemen are part of the working class, just like any other wage earner (it doesn't matter what job they do) and that strikes and industrial action are irrelevant to the struggle for socialism (due to the fact that workers aren't knowledgeable), we asked if the miners' strike had any significance for them and if so, quite simply, which side are they on when it comes down to workers battling against the armed might of the state? One speaker announced that "personally" he was with the miners while the other seemed to be trying to solve the question of class solidarity with family ties by announcing that many miners had cousins who were policemen! Sadly this was the level the SPGB chose to debate at. According to them the Marxist view of class consciousness can be summed up in "the CWO thinks the workers are stupid. Smart, we said, from a party which sees its task as spreading knowledge to 'ignorant' workers and complains, for example about the Falklands War as 'another dreadful example of ignorant workers being easily duped by the empty jingoism of desperate politicians'" (Socialist Standard May 1982).

The issue is not that the workers aren't know what socialism is about (many do) but in their atomised existence under capitalism they don't see how this can be achieved. Today's collective struggles are a preparation for tomorrow's revolution which will give the working class the confidence and the means to begin the task of building a new society.

For us the value of this debate was that it starkly exposed the SPGB as an enemy of the 'real movement' of the working class.

Review: Racism and the Class Struggle

Hand on the Sun by Tariq Mahmood, published by Penguin Books at £1.75.

In 1976 an 18 year old Asian youth, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, was attacked and murdered by a gang of white racists in Southall.

Instead of settling for token demonstrations organised by the self-appointed representatives of the Asian "community", young Asian workers in Southall took the natural course of action and organised for their own self-defence.

After these events in Southall the Asian Youth Movement (AYM), as it came to call itself, spread throughout Britain's Asian ghettos. The young generation of the Asian working class had come of age and in doing so was rejecting the traditional attitudes of resignation and submission for which their parents were renowned.

The author of *Hand on the Sun* is part of this new generation. He was one of the initial organisers of the AYM in Bradford and when this eventually split as it was bought off by the State through grants from bodies like the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) he helped organise the United Black Youth League (UBYL) which aimed to unite Asian and West Indian workers independently of the state's community relations machine. In 1981 he and eleven others were arrested for conspiracy against the state after Bradford police found 2 crates of petrol bombs. In the witness box Mahmood did not deny manufacturing bombs but argued they were made in self-defence - against an impending attack by racists which the police knew about and had done nothing to prevent.

The book is not about the 1981 events or the trial of the Bradford 12. It is a description of the formative experiences of those who were later to form the AYM in Bradford - i.e. Asian working class youth who, if not born here, were young enough to go through the schooling system.

In the mills the bosses successfully divided the workforce on a racial basis. The longer hours and lower pay of the Asian workers; whites in supervisory jobs; the racist trade union organisers coming with management to prevent strikes and a fight for a living wage ("Asian workers always viewed union officials with contempt, comparing them to corrupt government officials at home."). At home and in the streets the continual racist attacks ("hardly a night went by without the sound of someone's windows breaking, followed by the sound of running feet.") and the pretended powerlessness of the police to protect them. Instead, the ever-present power of the state manifested in the arbitrary and perpetually changing Immigration Laws which give the police a pretext for arresting black workers and raiding their homes at all hours of the day and night.

Apart from its documentary value the book is worth reading for the political questions it poses. Mahmood is not only concerned with fighting racism he also, not very coherently, wants a class fight against capitalism. He sees that racism is rooted in imperialism, in capital's need for cheap labour, its usefulness to the ruling class as a means to 'divide and rule' and he is looking for a solution. As the book describes how the Asian youth came to organise to defend their areas against attack and how leading a fight against redundancies at work meant organising the workers without the 'help' of the local trade union organiser, so it traces the central character's disillusion with left-wing capitalist organisations. At the beginning of the book he is a member of the newly-formed SWP (Socialist Workers Party). By the end he has left to form the AYM along with friends who have broken with other leftist organisations such as Militant. However, this disillusion does not involve a criticism of these groups' politics. It is the absence of any concrete tactic or guide to action whenever the would-be political leader is faced with a real situation of confrontation which leads to the disillusion. Hussein, intent on organising the workers in his mill, finds the ground swept from under his feet when he sees how the union organiser is in league with the bosses. It is an older, more experienced shop floor militant who realises the next fight must be without the union.

During the process of organising against the racist thugs he realises that slogans alone are no answer to the concrete problem of how to act. It would be easy to explain this importance simply as the result of reformist leftist politics. After all, how can an organisation which believes that the trade unions are the basis for organising the working class prepare its militants for leading a struggle outside of the union framework? This is true, but it ignores a deeper problem which is central to the question of creating a revolutionary party which has real roots in the working class - the problem of how to develop from a propagandist organisation into an organisation whose militants have the political clarity and concrete policies to lead workers' struggles as they occur in the real world. If revolutionaries cannot provide a practical answer to the question of "What do we do?" and "How do we fight?" the communist programme will remain hidden from the bulk of the working class.

It is ultra-leftist for revolutionaries to argue that racism is a secondary issue, an effect rather than the cause of black workers' oppression. This kind of theoretical abstraction only leads to abstentionism in practice. Of course capitalism is the real enemy of both black and white workers. Of course racism cannot be abolished within capitalist relations. But this only means that racist oppression is a permanent aspect of capitalism. For the black worker it is part and parcel of capitalist exploitation. In the real world it is impossible to separate racist oppression and harassment from the rest of capital's attacks. Faced with physical attacks on their lives and their homes, black workers have no alternative but to organise for their own defence. Those Asian workers who have realised that the traditional community leaders and their Uncle Tom organisations are no basis for a real defence and who are trying to organise independently of them can only be welcomed by revolutionaries. This does not mean that we support separatist black organisations any more than we support 'separate' white workers' organisations. It is simply welcoming the beginning of an organised response to the state and the bosses' violence.

However, for any organisation which springs from the class its response to an immediate, specific attack the problem of "where to go from here?" and "how to maintain organisational autonomy?" is posed. The answers to both questions is political and because Mahmood is politically confused *Hand on the Sun* provides no answers to them. The book describes how the AYM was formed by ex-militants of left-wing capitalist organisations who deliberately avoided giving the organisation political aims - despite the obvious political implications of their activity. With the majority of its members coming to regard the AYM as a sort of social club it's not surprising that it soon became another cog in the state's community relations machine. The UBYL which split from it and sought to unite black youth wherever their origin became involved in campaigns for individual Asians threatened or imprisoned by the Immigration Laws (e.g. the Free Anwar Ditta campaign). It did not succeed in extracting West Indians to its ranks and without any contact with a real revolutionary organisation its against left-wing capitalist factions it could not develop a clear revolutionary direction. The danger is the disillusion with leftism and ignorance of a revolutionary political alternative will mean militant black workers will fight with a healthy desire to fight capitalism as a whole become lost to communist politics as they retreat into their communities and start apologising for traditional conservative values simply by their failure to criticise. There are traces of this in *Hand on the Sun* when, for example, Mahmood fails to criticise the Asian elders who in real life went on to denounce the Bradford 12 for breaking the law and "letting down" their villages back home.

But *Hand on the Sun* also shows us the material basis for a concerted response by black and white workers to the capitalists and their state. Unemployed Asian youth are exactly the same position as their West Indian or

white counterparts. The schooling system is no more meaningful for white working class kids than it is for black kids. Black and white workers in jobs are all experiencing increased exploitation and the threat of redundancies. Although the ruling class uses racism to divide black and white workers whenever it can capitalism's world crisis knows no racial boundaries and no worker can escape its effects. Whether it is striking miners fighting against the state and strike breakers, unemployed youth protesting against their lot, or black workers organising to protect their communities from racist thugs and police harassment, it is up to revolutionaries to give them support.

However, the role of the revolutionary organisation cannot be limited to that of a support group. Neither are we interested in using the race issue in itself as the basis for recruiting militant black workers. Whenever and wherever we intervene in the daily struggles of the working class our aim is to develop a revolutionary political consciousness amongst the militants involved. We have to point to the wider implications of each struggle and use the immediate experience of the working class as a starting point for a deeper and wider political education. Militants looking for a revolutionary answer to capitalist exploitation and racist oppression can't find it from their immediate situation alone. This applies equally to black and white workers. There are a whole host of political lessons to be learned from the history of generations of international class struggle, of revolutions and their eventual defeat. The basic issues facing revolutionary Marxists: the nature of the capitalist crisis, imperialism and the national question, the role of the trade unions in the present epoch, the historical alternatives of war or revolution, the necessity for an international proletarian party - all these must be grasped by anyone who wants to be a revolutionary today. It is the task of the existing revolutionaries to bring these lessons to workers whose own struggles are the basis for developing revolutionary class consciousness. As Lenin said in *What is to be Done?*, workers understand very well the facts of their daily situation - they don't need to learn how much they are exploited from revolutionaries. What they are looking for are political lessons and a practical political lead. The same thing also holds today for black workers who don't need "revolutionaries" to come and tell them how much they are oppressed but whose political consciousness has not yet gone beyond left-wing capitalist ideology. We make no bones about the fact that we are trying to win over advanced workers to our politics. This isn't merely to swell the ranks of our organisation as an end in itself but an essential part of developing a revolutionary political consciousness within the working class. Only by winning over militant workers - black and white - can revolutionaries begin to lead the class struggle. Without this the creation of the international proletarian party will be impossible. At the same time, without an understanding of the communist programme militant workers will be unable to maintain an independent organisation against capitalism. The question of "building the party" and fighting racism are not separate issues, as Hussein in *Hand on the Sun* learned from his negative experience in the SWP. They are part of the same process of developing class consciousness and establishing a concrete political practice on the part of the revolutionary organisation.

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WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

In our last edition we published an example of the kind of work undertaken by the Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, which co-ordinates the international work of our organisation. Of the P.G.Int (Battaglia Comunista) and comrades in France who share the positions of our two organs. This was the statement on the Iran/Iraq war and the tasks of communists, aimed at the diaspora from this area, and to promote the adoption of revolutionary positions on the question.

The Bureau is not a regroupment; it is a point of reference and orientation for the tasks, theoretical and practical, of the re-building of the international party of the proletariat. Out of the work of the Bureau will come political confrontations and, we hope, collaborations, which will prepare the ground for a future regroupment. However, the Bureau has established political criteria for its work which consist of the points adopted by the first three international communist conferences. These points are sufficient to exclude from the framework both the capitalist left, and the neo-stalinist and councilist spectrum. These points are:

1. Recognition of the revolution of October 1917 in Russia as proletarian
2. Recognition of the break made with social democracy in the first two Congresses of the 3rd International
3. Complete rejection of state capitalism and self management
4. Rejection of all present communist and socialist parties as bourgeois
5. An orientation towards an organisation of revolutionaries which base itself on the doctrine and method of Marxism which it recognises as the science of the working class.
6. Rejection of all possibility of subordinating the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
7. Recognition of the operating role of the party in the daily struggle of the working class as well as in the revolution itself.

A brief platform and statutes of the Bureau have been printed in its organ *Communist Review* 1, copies of which are available from the CWO.

S.A. MINERS (Cont. from page 8)

into channels safe for capitalism. Communists in this strike would have been calling for election of strike committee and mass picketing (only a minority of workers struck), as well as trying to generalise the fight into one over housing, mobility, etc.

These events are symptomatic of a more general crisis in the organisation of capitalist exploitation in S.A. and the battles being fought amongst the S.A. ruling class.

APARTHEID MYTHS

The industrial capitalists have opposed apartheid since the nationalist got introduced it in the 1950s, for the simple reason that it restricted their supply of labour and their use of this labour for skilled jobs. It never represented the interests of the industrial capitalists, though in the boom period following the war it was an evil they could live with. However, in the 40 years since the war the weight of the African proletariat has increased enormously. In 1955 there were 500 000 black workers, today there are approximately 6 1/2 million, and the archaic organisation of this black proletariat is threatening capitalist accumulation itself.

Today the programme of the S.A. industrial capitalists is to create a permanent black proletariat with the normal union apparatus, such as exists in Europe, and they wish to bring in black workers to do jobs reserved for whites - at lower rates of course. The system of migrant labour must go. In addition they want to stabilise the townships and are prepared to pay to do this. They wish to allow workers to buy their own houses, to create a black middle class and help the African capitalists by means of cheap loans etc. In other words they wish to forge a class alliance with the rising African capitalists and scrap the official racial alliances which are no longer of any use. An example of their attempts to do this is their creation of the "Urban Foundation" which they set up after the Soweto riots of 1976. It was set up, as its president declared to "foster the emergence of a black middle class and greater stability in our urban societies." Since its creation it has provided loans for such things as the electrification of Soweto and the con-

We hoped, in taking this initiative, that the Bureau would be the forum for the initiation of contacts on a wider international level. In the last edition of *Workers Voice* we published a communication received from a group of ex Red Brigade members who are struggling towards communist positions. The Bureau has also received material from a group in India, whose outline statement we printed in the last IW. These materials allow us to clearly place the Indian comrades within the framework outlined above, and we welcome the formation of a communist party there. The Bureau has written to the Indian comrades (who show a willingness to engage in political debate) explaining the function of the Bureau

"Not least the 4th International Conference reaffirmed the need for an organisational reference point, a means for international debate and discussion within an agreed framework as part of the process towards the formation of the future international party. To this end the P.G.Int and the CWO along with comrades in France, formed the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP) in December last year. The Bureau is a means for the adhering organisations to conduct joint international work and its publication, *Communist Review*, we hope will prove to be a vehicle for international debate and for clarifying the tasks of the party." (IBRP Letter 14.9.84)

In the next edition of IW we will carry a review and critique of the positions of the Revolutionary Proletariat group (now renamed PROLETARIAN EMANCIPATION).

The Bureau has also received a communication from Mexico, from the Communist Collective of Altirama. This group, whose positions we are in the process of studying, expresses itself as anti-parliamentary, for the abolition of wage labour, sees war as the solution to capitalist crisis, and opposes popular fronts and "national revolution". In our preliminary reply and exchange of materials we welcomed their evolution and willingness to debate and

struction of schools and hospitals in the townships. It has also attempted, unsuccessfully to persuade the govt to allow Africans to own land in the townships. In the longer term this programme means sharing power with the black majority and this they are prepared to do. This is shown by the support of the mining houses, for example, for the liberal "progressive" party. They wish to do these things which entail abolishing apartheid because in the longer term it is the only way their profits can be secured. This, of course, is also the opinion of the American & European capitalists who own approximately 1/3 of the capital invested there.

The overall interests of the western bloc require such a change. South Africa is vital to the strategic interests of US imperialism. It is one of the world's main shipping lanes and with a virtual monopoly of certain strategic minerals. The stabilisation of South Africa, and a neutralisation of the system of exploitation is thus needed. But to achieve it will be extremely difficult, without untold social revolutions and the opening of the possibility of increasing Russian influence. The situation in South Africa is most likely to "mark time" until the world war, or proletarian revolution.

POKAR TOOR
Goldminers - already having to strike against the unions to fight for their interests

argued.

"Revolutionary organisations are not born in a day, with all their theories and policies in order. International discussion serves the first and foremost to encourage the maturation, the growth and selection of revolutionary forces." (IBRP Letter 8.8.84)

From Argentina the Bureau has received a communication from a group called *Insurreccion Obrera*, which most interestingly states,

"During the Falklands War, we were the only political group in Argentina which denounced the war, supported proletarian internationalism, calling for solidarity with the British working class...."War on War" was our slogan."

The materials received from this group show their opposition to frontism of all hues, to national liberation, and for the proletarian dictatorship, as well as an active orientation towards the working class. Again, we are studying their material and will bring fuller details to our readers in due course.

While it would be euphoric to overestimate the significance of these developments, it is nevertheless the case that the emergence of new groups, struggling towards communist positions, signifies the end of the reflux in the communist camp which took place in the mid 1970s, and ended the work of the International Conferences. The accelerating crisis, and equally importantly, the re-birth of class struggle on a wide scale, is providing the basis for a renewed development of the revolutionary avant-garde. This also means that the Bureau can now hopefully orient itself, after suitable preparation by letter and through its press, for the preparation of a future International Conference. To this we hope that not only will these new groups adhere, but also certain older groups, which took part in earlier conferences, once the hard taskmaster of reality has taught them their mistakes, and they place (or replace) themselves within the criteria adopted by earlier conferences.

The nationalist government is utterly unable to carry through such a programme, though it realises 55% of its economy, that change is necessary. Recent years have seen it allying itself with the industrial capitalists more openly through such measures as its support for the creation of black trade unions, turning a blind eye to violations of its labour laws and aiding with the mine bosses against the white miners when they struck to prevent black worker advancement. Its attempts to defuse the situation have finally crystallised in the ridiculous constitutional changes which came into effect in September and fool no one.

THE FUTURE

The S.African working class who number 8 million are the biggest industrial proletariat in Africa and will be crucial in the future struggles for communism. The present divisions in the working class are rooted in the way capitalism has developed in the country and are continually being exploited by the bosses to prevent workers understanding their position in class terms. Objectively white workers have far more in common with their black class brothers than with white capitalists. As elsewhere the real divisions in S.A. are class divisions not racial ones. The racial divisions which exist for historical and social reasons are used by the capitalist class when it suits them.

It is for this that the Africaners nationalists of the present got and the African nationalists are preparing. Such a war would involve tremendous bloodshed amongst workers and would not benefit them. Even if the African nationalists came to power and introduced a thoroughgoing system of state capitalism as they propose, benefits for the black workers would be minimal. In Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique have already discovered this.

The class struggle in S.Africa needs to be given political direction in combatting the rise of the Africaner and African nationalists and uniting black, brown and white workers in a single struggle for communism. For this it is necessary for communists in S.A. to form a communist organisation to intervene in the future struggles of the workers, and to link up with communists in Europe.

WOMEN'S VOICE

SOUTH AFRICA IN TURMOIL

WOMEN'S STRIKE

Introduction

Throughout the world the capitalist economic crisis is wreaking havoc on the myths of the post-war period of reconstruction. The myth of the "consumer society" has already bitten the dust in the advanced capitalist metropolises. But the myth of economic development has also crumbled, and nowhere more so than in the partly industrialised peripheral areas of capitalism - in Brazil, in Iran and in South Africa. The class struggle in these areas faces particular problems: so-called "anti-imperialism", as well as ethnic and racial divisions, and the minority nature of the proletariat. Communists cannot shrug off these problems and argue that their solution is automatically found on the great day that the proletariat of the capitalist heartlands moves. The beginnings of the proletarian revolution are quite conceivable in the countries of the semi-developed periphery. Communists must therefore attack constantly the nationalist and leftist illusions which largely dominate political existence there, and show concretely what a communist minority would do in such cases.

The case of South Africa is particularly compelling. Lately huge social upheavals, with a large proletarian adixture, have occurred against a backdrop of severe economic crisis. The following article elaborates the revolutionary position on these events.



The last two months have seen a fresh explosion of violence in South Africa. This has occurred on three separate fronts. Firstly the election of coloured (mixed race) and Indian deputies for the new parliamentary chambers, secondly resistance to rises in rent and transport costs in the African townships, and thirdly a strike by black mineworkers. The elections have led to over a thousand arrests and detentions. The riots in the townships, which continue as we go to press, have so far led to 85 deaths and hundreds of injured, and the strike in the gold mines led to the deaths of 9 striking miners and 500 seriously hurt. There are now an estimated 2 million unemployed and the steady fall in the price of gold is causing balance of payments problems. In addition the country is saddled with vast military expenditure financing its war in Namibia which costs £600 million annually, and supporting guerrilla movements in Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

All these events have a common cause whose root springs from the capitalist economic crisis and the pressures which capitalist development is itself exerting on the out-moded organisation of exploitation which exists in the country.

THE ELECTIONS

The government is imposing a new constitution on the country. Instead of the previous whites only parliament, a new 3 chamber parliament has been set up: one chamber for whites (178 seats), one for coloureds (85 seats) and one for Indians (45 seats). The coloured and Indian chambers have no real power, and the black majority, who number 19 million, constitute 75% of the population is totally excluded from the new set up. The new constitution is in reality a crude attempt by the Govt to

recruit the coloured and Indian populations as allies against the black majority, and the majority of the coloured and Indian people realise this. During the elections a successful multi-racial boycott campaign was conducted, which, despite beatings and imprisonment of its leaders led to abysmally low polls: - 35% and 16% of those eligible to vote voted in the coloured and Indian elections respectively. What was missing in this campaign was a communist presence. The task of revolutionaries would have been to have supported the campaign for a boycott of the elections, and to have combined this with an attack on parliamentary cretinism in general (see the article in this paper on *Democracy and Communism*) aimed at the Indian and coloured workers. Instead the campaign has been recuperated by the Indian and coloured bourgeois and petty bourgeois in their campaign for a "more democratic" system of exploitation.

THE TOWNSHIPS

The situation in the townships has again become critical for the Govt. These townships are supposed, in apartheid theory, to provide temporary accommodation for black migrant workers who are temporarily selling their labour power in the industrial centres. In reality these are enormous cities with permanent populations. Soweto alone has a population of over 12 million, and these cities cannot be run without the cooperation of the people who live in them. Over the last 10 years the Govt has been attempting to set up elected bodies to help run these townships, but with little success. Often they have even failed to find candidates to stand for election and the poll has been under 1%. The blacks who enter the management structure of the townships are seen as traitors.

The costs of running these cities, however, continues to rise and the workers living there have to foot the bill. At the same time, in common with workers worldwide, their wages are being held down. The latest round of rent, tax and transport rises detonated a new explosion of resistance in the townships of the Witwatersrand industrial area. The immediate targets of resentment were members of the town councils and black policemen many of whom were killed by demonstrators. The government minister in charge of the townships, attempting to clean up S.A.'s public image, tried to visit the townships himself and calm things down but was forced to retreat by helicopter. For the first time ever the police have had to call in the army to maintain order in the townships. But the weakness of this spontaneous movement was seen in the separation of its aim from those of the miners. The indigenous black proletariat of South Africa has largely abandoned work in the mines for less dangerous work in the factories and service industries which are better paid. Miners, often from Mozambique, Lesotho etc, form a sub-proletariat. Again the lack of a communist force, capable of formulating demands and strategy to link the separate struggles, was cruelly exposed.

THE MINES STRIKE

Black miners are mostly migrant workers recruited from the so called "homelands" and the neighbouring states. There are approximately 600 000 migrant workers in the gold mines

alone. They are recruited for fixed contracts usually annual, then sent home. They work 6 and often 7 days a week and live in appalling conditions in the mine compounds. Rates of pay are extremely low - approx £30 per week. Miners were demanding a 25% rise. Their union, the newly formed NUM, had taken the only one day the bosses increased their offer from 1% to 16% and the union called off the dogs. The mine owners were delighted at the role of the union and Anglo-American, which led the way in fostering the black 'National Union of Mineworkers' urged other mining houses to follow their lead and recognise the union. Many workers, however, were not satisfied at this settlement and in addition demanded guaranteed rights to employment since on returning from visits to their families workers often find they have been replaced by fresh recruits. In response to the refusal of many thousands of miners to return to work the bosses called in the police who shot 9 miners dead and wounded 450 most of whom had to be admitted to hospital. In explaining to the bosses used exactly the same words as Thatcher & Co use here. The police were, "protecting miners right to work" and the trouble was "caused by intimidators!"

The role of the National Union of Miners in this strike should be a salutary lesson. Concomitant with gaining negotiating and recruitment rights, it acted as a force controlling the explosion of class hatred, a role which the more far-sighted bosses see it performing more widely in the future. This clearly re-enforces our position that, irrespective of whether they are integrated into the state or not, unions today act everywhere in the interests of controlling the class struggle and deflecting it

Continued on page 7

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"But the transformation, either into joint stock companies, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces....The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the ideal personification of total national capital...The workers remain wage labourers, proletarians." (Engels)

The Labour Government recently announced that it intended to nationalise the shipbuilding and aircraft industries, despite theatrical howls of protest from the 'opposition' in Parliament. But these measures are not the start of 'socialist policies', but are rather a vital part of the states strategy for the survival of capitalism.

Why then is nationalisation so important to the ruling class? If shipbuilding and aircraft production (and a whole host of other industries), which are already only surviving on Government 'aid', are left to their own devices, they will collapse. But a contraction of these industries left to 'market forces' and private enterprise would not produce the best results for capitalism as a whole. What is needed is an orderly contraction of yards and factories in order to leave the most necessary and vital ones intact (eg those concerned with defence and those which will be most profitable in the longterm). ONLY THE STATE CAN CARRY OUT THIS RATIONALISATION.

All the ruling class, except the more backward members of the Tory Party, are agreed that certain 'lame ducks' must not be allowed to go to the wall. And this process of capitalist rationalisation via the state has already occurred internationally in many industries. Since coal, steel and other heavy industries are the backbone of any modern capitalist state this is no soft option for the ruling class. No country can go back to the days of allowing private industry to have free rein. The capital costs are too high for private capitalists. (It is highly unlikely that any North Sea oil would have come ashore if the Government had not helped to raise the capital).

If nationalisation is a policy of capitalism in crisis, what does it all mean for the workers? It does NOT mean that the government keeps firms going just to keep workers in work - a million and a half out of work can testify to that. For workers it means that instead of a whole industry collapsing the Government will become their boss. What money is available

2.

for investment will go to a few concentrated or vital plants or yards. In steel, for example, no less than 90,000 workers have gone 'down the road' since 1964. On the railways the story is the same - the workforce halved in the same period. Nationalisation, instead of being a device to save jobs, means for the workers heavy redundancies. The take-over of the shipyards and aircraft industry is only a prelude to their rationalisation and to massive redundancies, with increased productivity for the workers who remain.

Workers will find the unions and shop stewards are the ones shouting loudest for nationalisation (eg trying to whip up support for a strike in favour of the Varley Bill). But we are a far cry from the days of 1945 when millions of workers were swept along by the idea that nationalisation was the beginning of socialism. Today, workers are embittered and cynical about nationalisation. In Felixtowe the officials and stewards of the T.G.W.U. are shouting for the government to take-over the docks. In those industries already nationalised the unions and stewards are the first to collaborate with the management so that 'our' factory, 'our' steel mill can be run more efficiently. 'Participation' is the name of the game and its all to prevent the workers from rocking the 'nationalised' boat. For in reality, despite a change of name, despite workers in the boardroom, despite state control, it is capitalism and not the workers that gains by nationalisation. Are British Leyland workers any better off since the Government took over? Does the fact that many shipyards are already 50% Government owned prevent them from sacking workers? With the state, the CBI and the unions all in such cosy agreement about the need for higher productivity and no strikes; with Healy saying there will be no "significant increase in wages until 1980"(and just what is on the cards for then?), its obvious that plans to nationalise more industries are part of the whole attack on the working class, part of an attempt to make us get them out of their crisis by accepting redundancies, speed-up, cuts in manning levels and "sacrifices" in the "national interest".

The working class must see through nationalisation and what it means. We have no interest in the creation of a society where the state owns the means of production, as in Russia, and where the workers remain wage-slaves (neither, of course, do we have any interest in the maintainance of private capitalism). Our interests do not lie in working harder to make 'British industry' more profitable, any more than Italian or French workers should do the same for 'their' economies. Our interests lie in the creation of a world community of producers.

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A Year of Self-management

Nationalisation (or state capitalism) is not the only pseudo-socialism that is offered to the working class. As a more 'human' variety, self-management, (or ideas of 'workers capitalism'), has been pushed to the fore in the present economic crisis by the more 'enlightened' section of the ruling class. In Portugal recently the call for 'self-management' played a role in helping to prevent the class from attacking the State, instead spending its efforts on futile attempts to take over and manage individual factories. But these self-managed co-ops are no more socialism than is state ownership and neither are they a step towards it, rather they are a fast gallop away from it.

On a less dramatic level the nature of self-management can be illustrated by the study of the outstanding British examples of 'workers capitalism', which have just completed their first year in operation: Kirby Engineering in Liverpool which arose out of the collapse of the old Fischer-Bendix factory, and the Meriden Co-op in Coventry, resulting from the fall of N.V.F. motorcycle factory. Both these co-ops arose after the workers in the original factories had staged militant but unsuccessful struggles against the closure of the plants. At this point many

of the original work-force drifted away, but those who were left took up the cry launched by the shop stewards committees for the formation of workers co-ops. With the help of government grants (saving on the payment of unemployment benefits) and the investment of workers' redundancy money, the factory was purchased at knock-down prices and production restarted. After the publication of the first year's production figures, let's have a look at the results.

Co-ops can in no way escape the logic of the capitalist market. In order to compete in the capitalist jungle where the old private capitalists themselves had failed, the workers remaining in the factories had to abandon all the practices and conditions of work that the capitalists themselves could never abolish. Both factories have introduced almost total flexibility of labour in order that they can work with a much reduced labour force. But even this is not enough: both are operating with wage-rates substantially lower than those currently prevailing in the industry (at Meriden the wages are £5-£10 per week lower than in other engineering factories in the area). In other words the exploitation has been increased enormously and real wages have fallen. But in spite of this both co-ops are in real trouble and have ended the year with huge losses: Kirby has lost £1 million in its first year of production and Meriden has also made sub-

stantial losses. The option facing both of them is that experienced by the Scottish Daily News set up in Glasgow after the collapse of the Scottish Daily Express in 1974. There the workers accepted a reduction in manning from 1,500 to 500, flexibility, giving up wage increases etc, in order to start 'their own' paper, and even then it collapsed after a year and a half. Now the demoralised few dozen remaining are offering themselves to the capitalist whiz-kid Maxwell (Labour M.P.) with an even lower manning level and are abandoning this years £6 wage increase in order that he can exploit them more profitably! For Meriden and Kirby to continue in existence it will mean even lower wages and harder work. In fact both factories are already doing sub-contract work which is generally cheap labour - Meriden is now doing work formerly done in Taiwan.

Those who argue that the workers have no option but to set up co-operatives or self-managed factories and then proceed to 'help' them by uncritically publishing their struggles, advertising their products, are in reality the most short sighted. Most of these co-ops are doomed to collapse and the few that remain will only do so by the most massive exploitation of the labour force. This will leave the workers involved just as demoralised as those who originally signed on the dole. Within the capitalist system there is no solution, the only 'practical' one is to prepare for its destruction. The way forward has been shown by the message of the Bultaco workers printed on page 14 of this issue.

What we as revolutionaries have to offer workers faced with redundancy is not free advertising space for co-ops or cash for their fighting fund, but an analysis of the causes of their unemployment. While the crisis is at an immature stage as at present, it will not force the class into a generalised attack on capitalism, and isolated sectors thrown on the dole will often fall into the self-managed trap. Our task is not to encourage the illusions that this is any solution, but rather to show that this is a diversion for the class. Indeed, in any future upsurge on a wide-spread basis, ideas such as self-management, workers' control etc. will be as big an obstacle to the class' self emancipation as was the state capitalist programme of nationalisation in the past. Our interest as workers does not lie in taking over the running of capitalism and competing in the world market better than our bosses, but in the destruction of the world market and the creation of a society where the whole of production and exchange is collectively owned. Competition and profit will be replaced by planned production for humanity's material and cultural needs.

Workers forced into these co-ops should have no illusions; most will be only short term alternatives to the dole. In those which "survive" workers must fight against further increases in exploitation. (in Kirby strikes have already occurred). Class struggle, not self-management is the way ahead

SOUTH AFRICA

Since June events have taken a dramatic turn in South Africa: strikes by school students in the black ghetto areas surrounding Johannesburg; boycotts of factories by black workers; mounting tension and bitterness towards the state leading to clashes with the police and armed forces resulting in the massacre of about two hundred young blacks. These events have been claimed as the start of a revolutionary struggle by the blacks in South Africa against the white oppressors, a movement aided spiritually by the victory of the M.P.L.A. in Angola. In this article we shall look at the events in South Africa in an attempt to see in which direction the true interest of the South African working class lies.

The strike by the school students in Soweto and the surrounding townships began as a protest against being taught in Afrikaans, a language which to them symbolised the authority of the repressive state and apartheid. For historical reasons, which will be dealt with later in the article, the pro-apartheid section of the ruling class in South Africa are Afrikaan speaking of Dutch origin while the English speaking minority, representing as they do the industrial interests, tend to form a liberal opposition to apartheid. But this grievance over language was only a trigger...The bitterness among the young blacks which lead to the confrontation with the state was due more to the poverty in the black townships made worse recently by the economic crisis, and the system of apartheid which excludes the blacks from participating in South Africa's 'prosperity' which their labour created. But the movement, in spite of all its intensity, never really challenged the authority of the state, and is doomed to peter out. The black workers failed to respond to the events as a class and mass strikes failed to arise. Instead the workers reacted in an atomised fashion either by staying at home or participating in the rioting. The initial demand of the students was conceded, but the material conditions of the black working class remains unchanged.

THE WORKING CLASS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

More fruitful from a revolutionary point of view were the strikes by black workers from 1972-74. During that period strikes were frequent and sometimes bitter, indicating that the workers in South Africa are reacting to the crisis in the same way as workers all over the world: in 1972 a strike by the dockers and migrant workers in Namibia; in 1973 up to 100,000 workers on strike in one month in Natal where strike committees were formed; in 1974, 374 recorded stoppages involving 58,000 workers. But in spite of their militancy even these strikes had not the potential to develop into a revolutionary struggle.

This can only be achieved when the working class is moving towards unity, a task which, for historical reasons, will be a difficult one for the South African workers. At the moment the working class is divided by racial lines, a division which has been made worse by the government's policy of apartheid which was introduced in 1948. Apartheid ensures that all the skilled and supervisory jobs are done by whites. The blacks, excluded by law from serving an apprenticeship for a trade, are forced into the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Communists must remember, however, that there is a white working class in South Africa, though a prosperous and privileged one. Many white workers are recent immigrants from areas with a tradition of class struggle and it is also a mistake to see the white workers as foremen only. Factory workers in South Africa are often white. It is uncertain what role the white working class will play in any forthcoming revolutionary struggle. It is possible that they are too deeply imbued with racist ideology to unite with their black comrades in the struggle against capitalism. (Black workers also hold racist ideas, their hatred being directed towards the whites and Asians). With the deepening of the crisis the white workers will gradually lose their privileges and, as their material situation worsens, they may well come to the understanding that they are exploited as is the rest of the working class, black and white, the world over. Indeed, the white working class in South Africa has a history of militancy. Prior to the First World War there were militant white miners' strikes and in 1922, as part of a general world wide class movement, there were mass strikes in response to proposals to lower wages. At first this movement appeared promising, involving members of the newly formed Communist Party of South Africa and expelled union members. Neither did it lack militancy. The strikers formed armed pickets and 'Councils of Action' and had to be crushed by force after eight weeks on strike. However, towards the end of the struggle, as the strike degenerated and the workers became more and more disillusioned, the latent nationalism and racism came to the fore:

"The strikers sang the 'Red Flag'...and marched under a banner which proclaimed 'Workers of the World Unite and Fight for a White South Africa'. Despite attempts by the Council of Action to prevent the strike becoming a crude racist campaign, striker commandos began attacking Africans and Indians...Nationalist politicians appeared on the strike platforms alongside Communists, and at a mass rally in Johannesburg strikers overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for a Nationalist-Labour coup d'etat... The government called out aircraft and artillery to smash the strike, killing 230 workers and injuring hundreds more."
(African Trade Unions, Ion Davies P.57/58.)

How far this cooperation with the Nationalists by the South African Communist Party was the adoption of the Cominterns policy of 'United Fronts', or was simply an opportunistic tactic

determined by local conditions, it is difficult to tell.

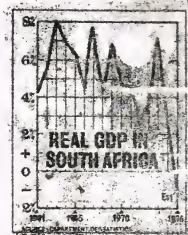
The black workers in South Africa form an unskilled labour force who perform low-paid work in the textile, canning and mass production industries, as well as working as domestic servants and urban utility workers, eg dustmen. The conditions under which they live form a fertile operating-ground for groups like the African National Congress (A.N.C.) and the South African 'Communist' Party, which call on the black workers to fight against white oppression and for "national liberation". But one thing is evident; the task of the black working class is not "national liberation". To struggle for black capitalism instead of white capitalism would be no advance. To see how "national liberation" brings about no improvement in the conditions of the working-class, the black South African workers need only to look at their next-door neighbour, Mozambique. In this 'marxist' state, conditions are so bad, that thousands of workers prefer to go to South Africa, where they can obtain a better price for their labour-power. In South Africa, the agricultural labour is done by seasonal workers from Mozambique (and Malawi), and the mine workers are mainly recruited from the same countries on a contract basis, from different tribes. These workers are sent back home when their labour is no longer required, and in doing this, the pro-apartheid Afrikaans capitalists hope to prevent the formation of a permanent working class. The wages and conditions of these workers are much worse than those of the urban, native South African black workers, and thus we should see the class being split in three ways, and not just simply along racial lines.

Whether all these strata in the working-class in South Africa can overcome their differences in the years ahead remains in the realm of conjecture. But one thing is certain; this is the only way forward, and it is the perspective that revolutionaries must call for.

THE CRISIS HITS SOUTH AFRICA.

These recent struggles in South Africa are all a part of the response of the class worldwide, a class which is made to pay for the capitalist crisis. Even South Africa, with the

richest mineral resources in the world, with a super-exploited working class, and an efficient regime of repression, has been severely hit by the economic crisis. And the symptoms are the same as elsewhere in the world; a currency crisis, inflation in double figures, and unemployment among black workers at 20%. For the first time since



the war, the South African economy has experienced a negative growth rate(see table on preceeding page). The recent slump in the price of gold (the main export of the country) has now added to the problems facing the economy. In fact, unless the gold price rises again, South Africa is heading towards disaster. As the Financial Times put it on 23rd. July,

"Failing(an increase in gold prices) the going will be rough, with no hope of reflation...And it looks, in the meantime, as if there could be bankruptcies and much more unemployment."

South Africa's reserves of foreign currency have fallen so low, that the Financial Times estimates that they are only enough to pay for three weeks' imports. As a result, it has been forced as were Britain and Italy, to go cap in hand to the U.S.A.-dominated International Monetary Fund(I.M.F.) to negotiate a huge loan; the 'strings attached' to this lead us into an analysis of the perspectives facing the South African capitalists.

NO WAY OUT.

The South African ruling class has stumbled into the crisis like a man blindfolded and with his hands tied; the situation facing them is bleak indeed, and they have very little room for manoeuvre, probably less than any ruling class in the world.

South Africa is dominated by American imperialism, and must in the final analysis serve the interests of the U.S.A. Dependent as it is on U.S. arms supplies, on the mass of American capital invested in South Africa, and now on credit from the U.S.-dominated I.M.F., South Africa must toe the line. This domination was made abundantly clear during the recent war in Angola, when South Africa intervened against the M.P.L.A. (1) When ordered by the U.S. to pull out her troops, South Africa had no alternative but to obey. At the moment, the apartheid policy of South Africa is an embarrassment to the U.S.A., as it tries too woo black African states(and those in the Middle-East) from Russian influence. Kissinger is trying to force South Africa to 'reform'. In this he is supported by the bulk of the industrial interests in South Africa, who find the apartheid system a drawback to economic advance. This is because of its role in limiting the mobility of labour via. the oppressive Pass Laws, and also because it limits the formation of a skilled, educated work force. But the seemingly logical option of 'liberalisation' is in fact closed to the South African rulers.

Those in South Africa's white population who support such a policy as is favoured by the U.S. and industrial capitalism (which, if not state-owned like the steelworks, is mainly international) are the English-speaking minority, who could not gain control of the State. This is the reserve of the

(1) See "Angola: Natural Paradise, Capitalist Inferno" in W.V.17

Afrikaaners, and it is precisely the Afrikaans capitalists whose material basis is apartheid, since they are the agricultural and mining interests, who can function quite well with cheap, unskilled black labour. Even were the Afrikaan politicians to be convinced, that the interests of South Africa as a whole lay in reform, such a policy would lead to a huge white backlash on the one hand, and to an increase in the restlessness of the black population on the other, that could only lead to a bloodbath.

Indeed, sections of the Afrikaan capitalists have been calling for quite the opposite, for an intensification of apartheid, and pushing on with the policy of the creation of Bantustans. These are African homelands, created on the worst land, in which every South African black must take out citizenship, leaving them with only migrant status in South Africa itself. Since most of the blacks have never been to these 'homelands' the turmoil which will result if the policy is enforced is easily imagined. In addition, to push ahead with such repressive policies can only lead in the end to an erosion of South Africa's industrial base, and leave it as a mining and agricultural country, with sophisticated industrial capitalism unable to function.

The most likely course that the South African bourgeoisie will follow, will be to adopt a few window dressing measures, like allowing blacks to train for low grade skills, ending some restrictions on their movement, etc., and at the same time to strengthen their system of physical repression (the Army, police etc.) with a foot in both camps, they will try to 'sit it out', in the hope that an economic recovery will be forthcoming. For the moment they have little to fear; though it seems as if South Africa is surrounded by hostile black states, they are so inferior militarily to South Africa that they pose no threat, and in any case many depend economically on the hated 'white oppressor'. As long as U.S. support is forthcoming, South Africa will survive, 'freezing' its social relations. If "black liberation" comes to South Africa, it will be courtesy of American imperialism.

For the working-class, black as well as white, the next few years under crisis-ridden capitalism will be bleak. Increasing unemployment, decline in real wages and general deterioration of living standards will be the capitalist strategy to help slow down the decline of the economy. We can only hope that the struggle against this decline will bring all the workers in South Africa into a common alliance against capitalism; the enemy which they can fight together, or which will destroy them together in a racial bloodbath. At any rate, we can expect no lead to the world proletariat from South Africa; as in certain other areas, they can only follow where more class-conscious sections of workers have shown the way in a revolutionary upheaval, and after a long experience of crisis and class struggle has begun to weaken class divisions.

STRUGGLE IN SPAIN

CWO INTRODUCTION

The following article has been produced by a group involved in the recent workers struggles in Spain. It has been translated into French, and then into English, and we regret any inaccuracies and stiffness in style this may have caused. Despite this, the main conclusions of the text emerge clearly, so that English-speaking workers can see that their Spanish brothers have arrived at an advanced stage of struggle, that is only dimly perceived over here.

Workers the world over are being told that the Spanish workers must first win the struggle for 'democracy' - a parliament, free elections, political parties, free trades unions etc., so that they can be better armed for the class struggle. Its the same line which successfully helped to bind the workers behind the Republican Government in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. This article, however, makes it absolutely clear that there are no intermediate stages for the class struggle; the workers must fight on their own class terrain against capitalism. And today in Spain the 'democracy' of the opposition (a coalition of Liberals, Social Democrats, Communists etc.) and the 'dictatorship' of the hard line Franco remnants, are but different masks for the same thing - the rule of capitalism. Today, Spanish capitalism needs democracy in order to gain entry to the E.E.C. (Common Market) and to get loans from the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.), for its crisis-ridden economy.

With inflation running at 20% and growing unemployment, the workers in Spain have no interest in 'democracy', but must strike out on their own class road. The article stresses the need for the struggle to be independent of, and against, all the capitalist parties of right or left, and it shows how the workers, in struggle, have discovered the need to create an autonomous organization to carry it out; the Workers' Assembly. The need for such an organization flows from the depth of the crisis in Spain, and the response of the Spanish working class.

However, if we say anything by way of criticism, it is because only through a deep examination of our own international movement can the working class ever challenge and destroy the capitalist system, and bring about a classless society. The Spanish workers show no lack of combativity, or eagerness for the struggle, but as the text shows, they have not yet fully seen where their own class interests lie; this is only natural, since clarity comes through the struggle itself. The next stage of the struggle can only come about through a conscious intervention. In reality, the

most advanced workers, such as the authors of this text, are charged with the task of working out a policy that will bring a communist society many steps nearer. To do this means they must understand the tasks the class faces; the suppression of the bourgeois state, communisation of industry, and extension of the revolution abroad. Like the other groups emerging in the Spanish working class during the recent struggles, and rejecting the trades unions, the workers' commissions and the Communist Party, the authors of this text must realise their political obligations, and that within the Spanish workers movement a tremendous amount of work remains to be done. In addition to intervention within the class movement, it is necessary to work towards the formation of a communist organization.

The second criticism is linked to the first. We have always argued that a 'correct' organizational form of the workers in struggle, is no guarantee against the movement going wrong. At the present stage of the crisis, where links between capitalist states are still strong, and where the room for compromise has not yet run out, the Spanish ruling class (of whatever faction) will still be able to draw the Assemblies of Delegates into negotiations about wages and conditions, which will pull the Assemblies onto the terrain of the reform of capitalism. The text tells us the workers commissions were able to outflank the Assemblies of Delegates, and in the longer term they can only become the shop-floor basis of the bureaucratized workers commissions. Indeed these commissions emerged in the 1960's as genuine expressions of the workers in struggle, and were gradually taken over by the 'communist' party. The same happened with the factory committees thrown up after April 1974 in Portugal as clear class expressions; now they function like shop stewards committees, controlled by the trades unions. Any organization which aims to represent the mass of the workers, while those masses (and the situation), are not revolutionary, will end up serving the interests of capital. The only alternatives are to become integrated into capitalism, or to dissolve once the struggle is over. Only in a revolutionary situation can the class create permanent organs of struggle. The failure to realise this is the main weakness of the text. Despite this, we are pleased to bring it to the attention of English-speaking workers.

C.W.O. (Sept. 76)

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES NO. 5

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WORKERS COMMISSIONS

against the class

The metalworkers (engineers) strike in the province of Barcelona is part of a vast strike movement in the most diverse regions of the country since the beginning of the year, provoked by the political, economic and social crisis shaking Spanish capitalism. All branches of the economy have been hit, and in the months of February and March alone, a total of 50 million hours of work have been lost in strikes.

In our province (Catalonia) the movement has been uninterrupted since the beginning of the year. Constantly, in Barcelona itself, as well as the suburbs and in many other towns, groups of workers on strike have appeared. The banks, building works, textiles, railways, education, engineering etc., have all been hit by strikes. Parallel with these sectional struggles, have erupted others notable for their length and bitterness like that of the engineers of Terrassa, or the general strike of Baño Llobregat. Other strikes which were limited to particular enterprises but also important were: FLEMA (a bitter struggle with many imprisoned), INGRA (almost four months of strike), HARRY-WALKER, MELER (four months), ALCHEMICA, BULTACO (four months and still continuing) etc. We should also mention those strikes which hit all or almost all of the branches of different firms as well as strikes which were industry wide: Michelin, Roca, the telephones and posts.

In this context of widespread class struggle, the metal workers strike, which has come to involve 340,000 workers forced the attention of all the forces of order, from the heads of the enterprises, to the government and opposition. One could sense the fear which this movement had inspired.

The government and the bosses tried to prevent the strike by conceding the 14% wage increase the day before the strike was due to begin and then broke off negotiations on the collective agreement, ignoring all the other demands. In the face of this provocative manoeuvre the Assembly of Delegates decided on the 21st of April to call for a strike on the following day. On their part, the Workers Commissions (1), while never ceasing to lament on the unwillingness of the bosses to negotiate, supported the strike summons, but as we will see later, did not put it into operation, except in certain areas, and prevented it

(1) These were organisations created by the workers during the Franco regime. They were gradually taken over and are now totally controlled by the Communist Party. They now form a bureaucratic apparatus.

in the big enterprises where the Commissions were dominant.

The objective of the Commissions is to be recognised by capitalism as 'valid representatives' of the workers, but they have failed to achieve this, in so far as the negotiations on the collective agreement had been broken off. But events developed in such a way, that the impression remains that the Workers Commissions and capitalism had come to an implicit, if not explicit, agreement to strangle or limit the strike and avoid the danger of an explosion in all the branches of industry in the province, and the provoking of a spontaneous and uncontrolled general strike of the type which both capitalism and the 'workers' organisations' fear. These workers' organisations are, in the last analysis, only the expression of another form of capitalism - state capitalism. One could conjecture that the P.S.U.C. (Communist Party of Catalonia), and the P.T.E. (Spanish Workers' Party) were asked by the Assembly of Catalonia and the Council of Political Forces, to assume their responsibilities in maintaining order.

Once the government took responsibility for the dispute, and took over the role of arbitration, it was clear that the conflict with capitalism was leading to a conflict with the state. The fear that this would lead to an enormous politicisation of the struggle gripped the 'democratic' and 'peaceful' forces, and the Workers' Commissions began to encourage workers to break the strike. In their strongholds, such as SEAT, Bajo-Llobregat and Tarrasa, work continued, while in hundreds of small and medium enterprises, the workers had already taken to the streets. The appeal of the Workers Commissions was followed blindly by their own militants, even though they were denounced as scabs by workers in some enterprises, and ran the risk of physical attack in the Workers Assemblies. This occurred in SEAT, PEGASO, HISPANO OLIVETTI, HARRY WALKER etc.

The consequences of these manoeuvrings was that the bureaucrats of the Workers Commissions succeeded in limiting the strike to 100,000 workers at its strongest moments, and the strike was therefore not the general strike of metalworkers which had originally been the aim. The combativity of the workers was shown by the formation of pickets, fights with police, assemblies in the streets and in churches, and by numerous demonstrations. Despite brutal police assaults on demonstrators and pickets, and the arrest of dozens of the workers, the 'leaders' recommended "calm and order". They tried to keep the workers silent on the demonstrations, in order to "avoid provocation". Then, when the bosses announced their renewed willingness to negotiate, a return to work was ordered, without any guarantee as to the release of those arrested, or to the granting of the original demands of the strikers.

But in spite of the importance of these facts, it was in

another area that the Workers Commissions played their most negative role, and here, if only in a limited way, they met with some opposition. It was in the Assemblies of Delegates (elected in the factories) that they most systematically obstructed the struggle. They slipped into the Assemblies the idea that they should participate in the commission dealing with the negotiations, which was composed of bureaucrats of the C.N.S. (state unions), elected at the second or third remove. (2). Naturally, many opposed participation in such a racket, but in the name of unity the Workers Commissions were able to get their view carried. It is necessary to underline the role played by the Maoist groups, and the majority of the Trotskyist groups, who accepted such a position in the name of unity. But once the strike had been broken, they salvaged their consciences by accusing the P.S.U.C. and the P.T.E. of being "traitors".

Interminable discussions took place, which resulted in the Assembly being emptied of all content; it retained only an "information" capacity, but lost all executive functions to the trades union bureaucrats of the C.N.S. However, it is not enough to denounce the various parties to explain the weaknesses of the struggle. At bottom, what was demonstrated was the lack of consciousness of the workers, who were incapable of opposing this political manipulation.

We, the metalworkers of Barcelona, have given proof of our great combativity, but also of a terrible political short-sightedness and lack of political understanding, the fruit of the obscurity of the last few years. But little by little we are learning the lessons of our recent struggles. In this one we saw how to form pickets, to fight in the street, the need to hold permanent assemblies, to organize street demonstrations in spite of the police. On the political level, the progress was less evident.

APPEAL TO ALL THE WORKING CLASS!

We, the workers of BULTACO, have been on strike since April 5 to pursue our demands (against lay-offs, increase for all workers of 5000 pesetas a month, 30 days holiday a year), aware that our problem is not limited to our situation, but affects all, and we invite the working class to show solidarity with our struggle. Economic and social exploitation, should constitute the basis of our unity, as an expression of our class consciousness.

Just as the product of our labour is international, capitalism which exploits us knows no frontiers or races. We recognise that we belong to the working class, which is international, and carries in it, and it alone, as a class conscious of its struggles, the future of the world, which is today in the hands of capital, and which is for all humanity, a world of misery and oppression. Workers of the world, the workers of BULTACO salute you fraternally, like our fathers yesterday, and sons tomorrow! Assembly of Bultaco Workers, San Adrian de Besos, Barcelona. 10 May 1976.

But little by little we are seeing our own specific class interests, which are incompatible with political manoeuvring, with the interests of the bourgeoisie which talks much of democracy. In reality, only a concentrated struggle against capitalism can solve the problems that are posed for the workers.

The Assembly of Delegates, despite its deformations and limitations, has shown that it alone is the real alternative proletarian organization, in so far as it assumes the tasks of orientation, co-ordination and information which are posed. In addition, it tried to unify with other organizations of a similar type, in order to lead to the construction of an Assembly of Delegates of Barcelona, which could co-ordinate with those of other towns and regions, and lead to effective co-ordination of all the struggles of the class over the whole country. Only in this way will it be able to break with the class collaboration of the present struggles, and arrive at the autonomous organization of the class. This must be outside the counterrevolutionary alternatives of the elitist cliques claiming to represent the workers, and break with the trades union organization of the struggle, legal or not, as well as the capitalist politics which the unions practise.

Only with this perspective in mind will we be able to go forward to the creation of a class organization-the Assembly of Delegates- which will be capable of breaking with this capitalist society in which we live, and of organizing the social revolution as a step towards the construction of a communist society. Only this can resolve the problems faced by the proletariat of Spain and the whole world;
For the organization of the class!
For the autonomy of the class!
For the world communist revolution!
Barcelona May, 1976.

- (2). The C.N.S. were unions set up under the Franco regime, without the right to strike, and controlled by the State. The Communist Party took part in elections to the C.N.S., and now controls many of them. (p14).

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C.W.O. CONTACT MEETINGS.

As an effort to explain our politics to a wider audience, and to involve contacts closer with the C.W.O.'s work, we are organizing a series of contact meetings over the coming winter. Those already planned are;

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Hungary 1956 | (Liverpool) | Oct 22 or 23. |
| Spain today | (Manchester) | Nov.12th. |

For further details, write to the group address(front cover).

SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

The finding of oil off the Scottish coast during the present economic crisis has given seeming support to the argument of the Scottish National Party (S.N.P.) that Scotland will be better off separate from Britain. This has caused the government to panic and move ahead with plans for devolution which will give Scotland a large degree of self-government. Revolutionaries need to combat the myths being circulated by the S.N.P. that Scottish workers can escape the crisis by the setting up of a Scottish government.

'National Independence' must be approached by the working class on a historical basis. There is no eternal 'right' to national self-determination. On the contrary, "the proletariat is the negation of all nationality" (Marx). Around the turn of this century, with the division of the world among several big powers, the independent development of any new nations onto the world market became impossible. All possible support by the working class for one bourgeois bloc against another ended and the uneasy spectre of 'National Unity' was forever laid to rest. It is using this approach that we must now look at Scottish Nationalism. (1)

SCOTLAND BEFORE THE UNION.

Even the briefest examination of Scottish history provides little or no support for nationalist claims of a nation 'One and Indivisible'. Prior to the Norman conquest in the eleventh century, Scotland was a collection of subsistence, tribal units with various ethnic groupings - Celts, Norse, Teutonic - thus making impossible any conception of 'nationality'. The Normans brought the South and East into a feudal economic and political entity and Catholicism became dominant, though the North West was to continue its tribal ways for several hundred years. The secession of the feudal barons (all French speaking!) led by Robert the Bruce from England in the 14th century had little effect on the population or the Scottish economy which remained very backward. Only in the 16th Century, with the emergence of Calvinism, did a progressive element enter the feeble Scottish state and found support from the weak bourgeoisie. From the beginning this movement sought union with protestant England and although this was to be a long time coming the revolution of 1559, capturing Church lands and spreading education and the 'work ethic', laid a favourable foundation for capitalism and the temporary unification with England (1648-1660) did much to finally undermine feudalism. From 1660 to 1700 frantic attempts

were made to develop an independent Scottish capitalism. A vast public subscription raised £150,000 in the disastrous scheme to colonise Darien in South America - losing 25% of Scotland's capital at a time when she was already losing her markets in France and the Baltic due to the mercantilist policies of stronger states. Finally, in 1707, the Scottish parliament accepted a voluntary political union with England.

This was not the 'sell-out' or 'treachery' of Nationalist melodrama but the logical and inevitable outcome of economic necessity. The union can not be compared with England's domination of Southern Ireland where rack-renting by absentee land-lords led to economic stagnation. In Scotland the bourgeoisie and nobility were left in control of the Church, Law, and Education while Scottish merchants were admitted into English domestic and overseas markets. Prior to 1707 Scotland was characterised by her feebleness and instability and the Union came as a voluntary act by the local ruling-class and bourgeoisie which, conscious of its weakness, had always sought such a union.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN SCOTLAND.

After a period of crisis and readjustment the effects of the union began to tell. English capital expanded the coal industry and created Europe's biggest iron-works at Carron; the 'Equivalent' - £150,000 compensation from England for the Darien disaster further stimulated advance. Glasgow boomed with its new-found access to American tobacco market, & it was the capital from this industry which was the basis of the industrialisation of Clydeside. The taming of the Highlands brought raw materials for the growing textile towns.

None of this economic development could have occurred without Union. An industrial and commercial bourgeoisie grew up regarding itself as British and produced representatives - Adam Smith, Ferguson, David Hume, Walter Scott etc., who were to have world-wide effect on bourgeois thinking. Reaction to this movement at this time came from petty-bourgeois radicalism and artisan revolt but these occurred alongside similar reactions in England and none assumed a nationalist form

The economic development of Scotland was now running parallel to that of England and it was now no more possible to talk of a separate Scottish economy than a separate Lancashire one. By 1820, a working class had been formed, and utopian socialist thinking began to take hold, eg Owenism. From 1815 to 1820, Britain as a whole saw waves of working class rioting, machine breaking and demonstrations, aiming at a reform of the atrocious political and economic servitude of the workers. In Scotland, this culminated in the first mass strike in proletarian history, when 60,000 mainly textile workers stopped work in May, demanding social reform. In certain places actual uprisings took place, and clashes with the Army led to deaths, followed by execution of the leaders. The nationalist school of falsification has recently tried to

claim these events for the separatist cause, but the class composition, (and political aims) of the movement was identical to that of movements in England at the same time, and the 'rising' of 1820 was actually timed to co-incide with similar risings in the south.

After this period the "Scottish Economy" moved, with that of the rest of the U.K., from the cotton to the iron and coal phase of industrialisation, and from there to the growth of the steel-using industries. By about 1900 Scotland-like Wales and the north of England, had about 25% of its active population engaged in the heavy industries of coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering. After the 1820 rising, the class devoted itself to trades union, and reform activity. In common with the class in the rest of the U.K., Scottish workers supported the Chartist movement of 1839-48, organizing mass demonstrations and sometimes strikes for reform and the right to vote. Despite very moderate leaders, the rank and file occasionally burst forth, eg. in the riots in Dundee in 1842 and Glasgow in 1848. Economic prosperity after 1850 killed the movement, and then trades unions of the skilled workers began to win legality and high wages, followed by the unionisation of the unskilled workers after 1880. Again, none of these movements claimed nationalist aims. By now Scotland was split like England, along class lines, and not like Ireland across class lines into pro and anti-nationalists.

FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

The imperialist war with Germany, breaking out in 1914, led to a great radicalisation of the British working class, and this was especially true on Clydeside, where a proletarian aristocracy of engineering workers was dealt hammer blows by dilution and deteriorating economic conditions. During the strikes which marked the war years, the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee movement was developed on Clydeside, in common with advanced centres in England, such as Sheffield and Barrow. Similar rank and file movements emerged at this time in the south Wales coalfield. Despite weaknesses often traceable to the pre-war influence of syndicalist ideas (such as refusal to take an explicit defeatist position on the war, localism, and a tendency to sectionalism), the advanced elements in these movements saw the post war tasks as being revolutionary. Socialist groups, like the Socialist Labour Party (S.L.P.) gained great influence among the workers of Clydeside, but despite their revolutionary opposition to the war as an organization, within the Shop Stewards movement they confined themselves to a 'service' role. For this they were correctly criticised by the group-around John Maclean, who also opposed the imperialist war. It is important to point out that the opposition to the war in Scotland, culminating in the strike of May 1918 was on an internationalist basis, that is that the war was a capitalist war aimed against the workers of all countries. Again the contrast with Ireland is striking; here the motto of even erstwhile socialists like Connolly was

that the war was an "English" war, with nothing in it for Ireland.

The victory of British capitalism in 1918 helped ensure that despite activities in the police and navy, the advanced sectors of the class were isolated from the mass of the class. But the movement did not subside without a struggle, and in 1919 with unemployment rising, mass strikes broke out in Glasgow and Belfast. In Glasgow 100,000 came out, pickets closed down the factories, mass meetings solidified the conflict, and a daily strike bulletin was produced. In this struggle the I.L.P. again showed its limitations by following a service role, acting in the strike committee and producing the strike bulletin, but not putting forward any independent revolutionary position. The state responded by rushing in troops to Glasgow, and confining local troops, suspected of disaffection, to barracks. Virtual martial law was declared, mass meetings attacked and broken up, and the strike committee arrested and deported; this repression finally broke the back of the strike. Again, however, one thing is clear, at no time was the slightest nationalist demand put forward in this struggle, at no time was the local bourgeoisie-'the Hun in our backyard'-as they were called, seen as any better than the "English" variety.

In reaction to the smashing of the 1919 strike a swing towards parliamentarism took place in the class, with the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) gaining support as a left social democratic alternative to the Labour Party. It was also at this time, as the flow of working class activity subsided, that a voice for "Scottish socialism" and a "Scottish breakaway" began to be heard. John Maclean with his "Scottish Republicanism" typifying the demoralised slide of former class militants into a pathetic localism. While the workers had been on the offensive, nationalism could make no headway-the two movements shared no common cause. Even Maclean, despite his stature in the workers' ranks, found few to follow him down the nationalist path.

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM.

The reasons we have dealt at length with Scotland's history, is to show that nationalism has at no time served the interests of the Scottish economy, or of the Scottish working class. In the period of capitalism's dynamic growth, the Scottish bourgeoisie identified itself exclusively with British capitalism, while the Scottish worker has seen himself as a part of the British working class, and indeed (in periods of high activity) as part of the world working class. It is only in the period of capitalist decadence that Scottish nationalism raises its head.

Where then have today's nationalists sprung from? Britain has been sliding down the first division of capitalist powers

since the turn of the century, and her inability to benefit from the boom following the second world war has increased her rate of decline. The effects of this decline have been particularly but not exclusively, felt in the outlying regions, eg. Northern Ireland, north England, Wales and Scotland, where the emphasis on heavy industry has required heavy capital investments to maintain competitiveness on the world market-capital investment which has become more and more unavailable. This has not been the result of "Whitehall Bureaucrats" or "Sassenach Prejudice", but of the declining position of Britain in the world economy.

By the 1920's certain sectors of the bourgeoisie in Scotland not directly involved in production began to believe that salvation lay in separation from England. In 1928 a motley collection of clergymen, lawyers and intellectuals of sundry tiny nationalist groupings united to form the Scottish National Party (S.N.P.). Their battle-cry till the discovery of oil, was that Scotland could survive on the revenue from whisky production! This lunatic idea is now forgotten, but it kept them warm as they staggered into the 60's as a tiny, forlorn group. By the later 1960's the crisis had begun to hit the petty-bourgeoisie (2), such as shopkeepers, small businessmen, fishermen, farmers, and they flocked to the S.N.P. for deliverance, since none of the 'official' capitalist parties were interested in their plight. These strata still form the hard core membership, along with the already-mentioned professional groupings. The discovery of oil off the Scottish coast, at last gave them a semblance of credibility, and "It's Scotland's Oil" quickly became their battlecry.

A cursory glance at capital ownership in Scotland, however, reveals that most of heavy industry is state-owned (mines, steel, car industry, shipyards etc.), while light industry is dominated by British or foreign (mainly U.S.) capital. For example, "Scottish" ownership in electrical engineering and electronics amounts to a mere 8% of the whole. The small-time capitalist supporters of the S.N.P. who lay claim to "Scotland's glorious future" would be hard put to find the capital resources necessary to build one drilling platform, never mind the dozens needed, the thousands of miles of pipeline, supply fleets and industries, refineries and technological back-up. If North Sea Oil were truly Scottish Oil, then it would never see the light of day. "Scotland's Oil" is the property of international capital, and even that with the deepening of the crisis, is beginning to doubt whether North Sea Oil operations can continue for much longer to be profitable.

Another important point to make is that even if Scotland could exploit "her" oil, any new life pumped into the Scottish economy, and "benefits" for the Scottish workers would be short-lived. The recently published summer issue of the Scottish Economic Bulletin forecasts that Scotland's spin-off from North Sea Oil has peaked, and will now decline. The proletariat is an international class, and is being attacked by the effects of the world economic crisis; "Scottish Oil" is no way out of the grim future

facing the Scottish working class. Indeed, most workers realise this, and their atomised votes which have brought the S.N.P. greater support than all other parties barring the Labour Party, is a passive 'protest' vote; very few workers are involved actively in the nationalist ranks. Not only have the workers few illusions, even the S.N.P. is now grudgingly being forced to admit that "going it alone" is impossible. Recent proposals from Dr. McIntyre, the party president, have stated that,

"Scotland's interests would be best served by remaining with England a member of the Common Market, so ensuring continued access for each country's exports to the home market of the other."

THE WORKERS AND THE CRISIS.

After 1919, the Scottish working class, demoralised and defeated, greeted the crisis years of the 1920's and 30's with apathy and despair, and was ready prey for the slaughter of World War II. But today it shares the confidence and combativity of the international working class. Since the mid 1960's Scotland has experienced working class reaction to the effects of the crisis, witnessed all over the world. Car workers, municipal workers, ship builders, print workers, building workers and miners have all been engaged in struggle in the past few years. The high point of the struggle was in Clydeside in late 1974, when a wave of unofficial strikes, involving about 35,000 workers erupted. The most significant of these, the lorry drivers strike, sent flying pickets to England to spread the struggle, and elected a rotating strike committee, to ensure mass participation in the struggle. It has only been when isolation and demoralisation set in that the slightest nationalist response has occurred-the Glasgow Daily Express in 1974 being the prime example of this (3). The tasks facing the Scottish workers today are those facing the international working class. Through their struggles they must re-learn the main lesson of the revolutionary wave of 1917-21-"The Workers have no Fatherland". "Nationalism" has no material basis today; it is a reactionary MYTH, and must be fought.

NOTES:

- (1). For a fuller treatment of the issue of nationalism, see Revolutionary Perspectives No2, "Marxism and the Irish Question", available at 35 (post paid) from group address.
- (2). For an explanation of why the crisis hits the petty-capitalists first, see the text in Revolutionary Perspectives No3, "Crisis and the Class Struggle"
- (3). The experience of the "Express" struggle and "Co-op" is analysed in detail in Workers Voice No 13.(10p. post pd.).

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SMITH AFRICA : ANC IN THE WINGS

As the death toll continues to mount in the black townships South Africa is moving daily closer to outright civil war. The splanbos and the bullets have failed to quell the desperate heroism of a people driven to revolt by conditions of exploitation and oppression which have seen three and a half millions of people forcibly removed from their homes in the last fifteen years and has left three million children permanently undernourished. Unlike earlier crises like Sharpeville in 1960 the apartheid regime has found that a few deaths have not been enough to restore order this time. The white lager has begun to break up with the bosses of the multi-nationals, the leaders of South African industry, and even the Dutch Reform Church (which used to provide the religious justification for apartheid) having all crossed the border to discuss a new order of things with Oliver Tambo, leader of the African National Congress (ANC). Whilst Botha has been denouncing his former allies as traitors there are other signs that the old order is changing more rapidly than he can control. Whilst on his liberal wing there are calls for a more rapid "reform" of apartheid the right wing splitters from the ruling National Party, are pushing a new line from the failure of Botha's efforts to restore order. Equally disturbing for the South African government has been the signs that whites in some areas already recognise that the game is up. Whilst the only growth area of the South African economy is in the sector of the security firms who hire out armed guards to protect white homes there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of whites falling to report for military service (from 1500 for the whole of last year to nearly 8000 for the first nine months of this year). Those who fled the collapse of the Smith regime in Rhodesia a few years ago are now selling up (if they can get anyone to buy their property) to return to Mugabe's Zimbabwe on the grounds that he has managed to make it safer for whites to live there.

BOTHA'S FRIENDS

Botha is however not yet completely alone. Despite the campaigns of recent converts to anti-apartheid ideas in the USA and despite the shift in investment away from South Africa this still is the key to international support. In fact it is not surprising that the louder any government or its condemnation of apartheid the smaller its investment in South Africa. This explains why Reagan tried to pretend that conditions in South Africa were not really all that bad for black workers or why Mrs Thatcher should "bat for Botha" at the farce in Barbados known as the Commonwealth Conference. Both countries have something like £6 billions of investments in South Africa and the job of extricating them is a delicate one. Both Reagan and Thatcher want Botha to reform apartheid in order to create a more stable environment to protect their capital but they recognise that this will be very difficult for Botha to achieve given the determination of the South African masses to fight and die in the growing civil war on the one hand, and the widespread belief among the whites that he is some kind of clown who created the present revolt by his attempt at reforming the more petty aspects of the apartheid system. All this seems to point to more and more violent confrontations since the struggle of the black population is no longer confined to this or that township or area, despite Botha's restrictions on the reporting of the struggle by the world press.

IMPERIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

However it is not the world's press which has put the South African state in the position of pariah but the fact that apartheid has now outlived its usefulness for global capitalism. In many ways apartheid is the last form of old-style colonialism which was itself a form of imperialism in which physical domination of an area to control its workforce and raw materials was thought to be essential. Since the end of the Second World War imperialism has discovered an area (since you don't have to pay police costs) but that it is easier to allow the local bourgeoisie to take political control since the imperialists can continue to dominate the area's economy. The multi-nationalist movements in Africa and elsewhere to overthrow the imperialist movements of national-ist movements in Africa and elsewhere to know that they will not take their countries into the new world order but will continue to keep those areas safe for the western capital that they require. Thus Mugabe's Zimbabwe is now paradoxically seen as a haven for ex-Rhodesians in strife-torn South Africa.

This is why the leaders of the South African multinationals are seeking a deal with the ANC. After the recent meeting between Oliver Tambo of the ANC and Gavin Reilly of the Anglo American Corporation there was clearly an

attempt by both sides to reach agreement. Whilst Reilly's aides made concessions to the ANC's state capitalist, nationalist ideology Tambo is reputed to have agreed that large sections of the economy would be "left open to private enterprise". The nationalists thus represent the best hope for capitalists. In our last issue we pointed out the fact that the capitalist leaders were ending apartheid to save capitalism". Even the bourgeois press have recognised since that

"Capitalism in South Africa has now entered its fight for survival. It faces the risk that, unless it can distance itself from apartheid, it will go down the drain with it."

This is why the struggle against apartheid is not in itself enough. It has to be widened into a struggle against all aspects of capitalist exploitation; against multinational firms as well as Africanist black bourgeoisie against the nationalist nationalists and also against the imperialist bourgeoisie. Although the workers of South Africa have not yet created their own independent weapon of emancipation - i.e. a communist party, the present struggle is furnishing the conditions which can lead to the creation of communist nuclei within the working class. It is our task as communists to provide the political critique of all the capitalist factions in South Africa and not to succumb to the prevailing current of anti-apartheid activism. Only in this way will we forge the essential basis for the liberation of all the world's workers - the communist programme.

IN BRITAIN : FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE

Fierce fighting between police and unemployed youths has again erupted in six of Britain's inner cities, sparked off by police harassment and violence. Large scale unrest occurred in Handsworth and Brixton, and in Tottenham local people took over the area for two hours before police could regain control. Police stations were bombed and riot police pelted with stones, bombs and bullets. Journalists and politicians either came under attack or were chased out of the area.

CLASS STRUGGLE NOT RACE RIOT

As in 1961 the press have done their best to distort the reasons behind the revolts. Now were race riots. Handsworth youths were rioting against Asians. On the contrary, the revolt was sparked off when black youths came to the aid of an Asian man being arrested by police. Most of the shops looted were Asian owned simply because most of the shops in the area belonging to Asians. But black and black and Asian youths were also looted and white, the Asian temple near the centre of the revolt was left untouched.

It is clear who the anger was directed against. When Home Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived on the scene he was showered with bricks and abuse by an angry crowd. His arrival sparked off further "unrest". When he tried to interview white householders he and the camera

crew with him were told there to go.

By the time Brixton and Tottenham erupted, claims of racial tension were wearing thin. Even the black community leaders in Brixton and people reacted angrily to their attempts to calm them down. On Sunday (19th) the arrival of the Home Office's race relations consultant, Trevor Hall (who is black) caused more anger and he had to hastily retreat in a taxi. During the Saturday night's events, 1,500 had taken to the streets. 300 of them were white. Half of those arrested were also white.

As the intensity of the revolts became clearer, especially when battles in Tottenham left 220 police injured and 1 dead, the police, politicians, the press and many trades union each other in denouncing the "riots" as criminal. All conveniently forgot that the original violence was by the police at the home of Cynthia Jarrett or that the Brixton events were started by the forces of the state shooting Cheryl Groce.

The press attempted to explain the revolts as having been caused by "criminally-minded" people who had lost control of themselves on drink and drugs. The Times suggested the Handsworth riots had occurred because the police wanted to clear the streets of cannibals. But it couldn't explain why the police used the Restafarians to patrol the streets of

continued on p. 2

WELFARE STATE : WHERE NEXT?

The term "Welfare state" was originally coined to contrast Britain's so-called "peace-loving democracy" with Hitler's "warfare state". The decisive influence in the evolution of the welfare state was the 2nd World War. The ruling class wanted to ensure that post-war capitalist society would never be threatened by working class revolution. In Britain, where the working class had been better off under war-time rationing, the seminal document was the Beveridge Plan of 1942. After the depredations of the Thirties Beveridge emerged like the hero of a morality play. He determined to do battle with the "four giant" - disease, want, idleness, ignorance. The biggest giant of them all - unemployment, termed "idleness" by Beveridge, was overcome by Keynesian economic policies of state-induced demand.

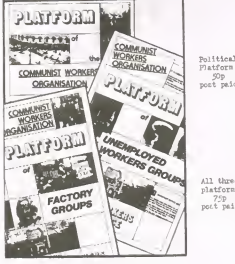
ORIGINS AND POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

Following the defeats of the European working class, rearmament and the 2nd World War itself gradually reversed the process of capital accumulation and the rate of profit and the rate of surplus value began to increase in the 1940s. However the war had demonstrated to the bourgeoisie the value of a healthy, disciplined, reasonably educated working class, one capable of handling the new technology required for a period of reconstruction and economic expansion.

With the Labour Party in the wartime coalition, the trade unions under Bevin delivered up a series of corporatist agreements. The quid pro quo for this class collaboration was to be full employment and welfare reforms. This formed the basis for the post-war "settlement" between capital and labour in the late 40s under the Labour Government. Expenditure on state social services rose from 10.9% of GNP in 1937 to 28.8% in 1975. By the mid 1960s, however, large cracks were appearing in the economic orthodoxy which oversaw the post-war boom. The rate of profit began to fall sharply and Keynesian remedies gradually gave way to direct attempts to limit wage increases by way of incomes policies. The mid 60s also saw the "rediscovery of poverty" under a Labour government in various exposes of the times this added to pressures for more welfare expenditure which continued to grow as a proportion of GNP until the mid 1970s.

Having suffered no major defeat since 1926, with relatively full employment, the introduction of the post-war welfare reforms did lead to an overall improvement in the living conditions of British workers. However, under decadent capitalism's infernal spiral of crisis - war - reconstruction, these palliatives were bound to be temporary and short lived, in effect limited to one generation.

Platforms



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ation. The fundamental purpose for the ruling class had been to create a labour force that was both physically fit and ideologically integrated, one capable of expending its life force for the greater good of profitability on an increasingly competitive world market. Here too their success is of an historically brief duration.

THE MYTH OF THE NEUTRALITY OF THE WELFARE STATE

The capitalist state is neither a relatively autonomous political institution as bourgeois ideology suggests, nor is it merely the economic result of the action of many capitalists. It serves to produce and reproduce the conditions for capital accumulation to occur and at different periods assumes different forms according to the historically specific demands of the law of value. Thus the "welfare state" was discovered to be essential to the survival of capitalist society, not least because it serves to integrate the proletariat of the capitalist heartlands and at the same time prevents the destruction of the labour force by capitalist competition. The state maintains the appearance of class neutrality in this process of the domination of capital whilst guaranteeing (as far as it is able) and regulating the conditions for capitalism's survival.

The welfare state is a crucial apparatus, though incomplete, for putting individual citizenship and the unity of the nation before class loyalty and organisation. This is the predominant political ideology within the capitalist Labour Party which seeks to promote class harmony through welfare reform. Time and time again the bourgeois welfare state expert, discussing the 1945 reforms, summed up their position, "reform... connected with the demand for one society for services which would deepen and enlarge self respect" - which would manifestly encourage social integration."

THATCHER'S CHANGE OF ATTACK

For the duration of the post-war boom and into the 1970s the social democratic ideology of welfare was the prevailing, across-party consensus within the dominant echelons of the bourgeoisie. The advent of monetarist "Thatcherism" and its programme of reduced public expenditure, privatisation and price stability through control of the money supply, displaced the old conservatism in an effort to respond to the increasing social tensions of the crisis and the growing masses of the unemployed.

Although Britain has one of the lowest welfare spending budgets per head of population in Europe the social security budget is by far the largest state spending programme, making up 30% of all public expenditure. Topping £40bn, it is larger than defence, health and housing put together. In the decade '69-79, non-contributory benefit payments increased from £967m to £6,118m. An estimated 20 million people in Britain are in one way or another dependent on it. Modelled on the same principles as a private insurance scheme, the Beveridge calculations were based on a projected maximum of 8% unemployment rate. The growing army of irredeemable unemployment (15% official rate), of old age pensioners, of those in receipt of child and housing benefits - the very existence of these dispossessed masses constantly threatens to call the bluff on the bourgeoisie's actuarial fiction.

Thus, although there is no doubt that a section of the ruling class would like to dismantle the Welfare State altogether (as early as 1978 an ogre like Rhodes Boyson is reported to have said "Conservatives must actively work for the Welfare State to withdraw any personal freedom and independent provision takes its place") and while the present government is doing its best to reduce spending by cutting welfare provision, what we have been seeing is not so much the dismantling of the Welfare State as its restructuring. In other words the adaptation of social policy to serve the continuing needs of capital. For example, the no-renter away from "liberal" and

"progressive" methods in education towards a purely vocational training of the labour force for the market and in social security the use of administrative work enforcement schemes with an increasing emphasis on maintaining the work ethic.

Of course the present needs of capital in crisis are to reduce state spending but in the face of a still undefeated and restive working class, the Tory approach on the welfare state front continues to be cautious, Fowler's Green Paper being more of a damp squib than an onslaught of firework. Although certain backward layers have become susceptible to the Tories ideological conditioning (there is no alternative), the main concentrations of the class remain immune, sceptical if not actively hostile to the utopian carrot of a "property owning democracy". The deep implantation in the popular consciousness of the mass of workers that the welfare state, particularly the NHS, represents a protective bulwark against capital's anarchy, is a formidable obstacle in the Tories' attempt at a more fundamental attack on welfare benefits and services than the piecemeal cuts which have eroded working class living standards since the Seventies. In short the Government fears the social consequences of such a move and the latest wave of inner city revolts of the unemployed only increases its fears.

CONCLUSION

Ruling class ideology of the Welfare State as an historic act of collective altruism disguises both its origins in the class struggle and the pressure on advanced capital to maintain a healthy labour force. In contrast to the left wing of the bourgeoisie who masquerade as socialist the Labour Party and the so-called Communist Party who say that the state can be transformed in the interests of the proletariat, brought under "democratic" control etc. and in contrast to the various Trotskyist and quasi-Trotskyist groups who promote a state capitalist line, we reiterate that the capitalist state cannot guarantee the welfare of its "citizens". The capitalist state must be smashed, consigned to historical dust. A gargantuan task but ultimately the only road to a truly universal human welfare.

BRITAIN Fighting for a future

continued from p-1

Handsforth to prevent a 3rd night of rioting in return for the police keeping a low profile in the area.

One former Brixton "community leader" called the revolts "a pretext for people to rob and go looting". Gerald Kaufman spoke for the whole Labour Party when he denounced the events in Tottenham as an "inexcusable crime". Yet all attempts to denounce these revolts as the acts of criminals don't tally with crime figures for the areas before the "riots" began. Handsforth and its surrounding area, for example, has a population of 250,000 but comparatively low crime figures.

The fact is, the ruling class sees all class struggle as criminal. It outlawed secondary and mass picketing and used the utmost rigour of the law at every opportunity as a weapon against striking miners 1984/5, the more frightened it is the more "criminal" is the working class. Since the police took a hammering at Tottenham the Welfare State altogether (as early as 1978 Hurd has promised to widen their powers. A new law and order bill is in the pipeline to make "disorderly conduct" a new offence. The police are to be armed with CS gas and plastic bullets and the use of water cannon hasn't been ruled out. The ruling class wants to stamp out "serious public disorder" quickly because it knows it has the potential to become something else - a potent threat to the whole system.

And the ruling class isn't just the Tories.

LIVERPOOL SWP AND LABOUR LEFT

The attack by the Labour Party leadership on the Militants of Liverpool Council is seen by such groups as the SWP as part of a systematic attack on "anyone who stands up for socialist principles within the Labour Party" (Lindsay German, Socialist Worker).

That the SWP considers the Liverpool Militants to be standing up for socialist principles says much about both groups.

The Militant-dominated council began in Liverpool an ambitious programme of public spending on such necessary things as housing. But under capitalism, everything must be paid for. The floundering of the Militants since the money ran out shows exactly how socialist they are, and more importantly, the impossibility of using elected bodies such as councils or parliament to run the state or sections of the state in the workers' interests. This has become increasingly clear as the council directly attacks the workers.

At first the council tried to make its workers take strike action, "to save jobs", but in reality to save the council the expense of paying their wages. That this is the case is shown by the council's subsequent proposal to make its workforce redundant and re-hire it after three months, saving a quarter's pay and, after that had been rejected as it was too damaging to Labour's popularity, its idea of laying its workers off for January, locking them out for only one month instead of three!

In short, Militant and its fellow assassins are "killing" the council workforce. Moreover, Militant's anti-working class actions are accompanied by anti-socialist theory.

Firstly, they spread the idea that the capitalist state can be run in the interests of the working class. Any attempt to do this is doomed to fail, precisely because capitalism's state is organised to defend the capitalist interests against those of the workers. This truth becomes more apparent as the capitalist crisis deepens, because then the administrators of the capitalist state, whoever they are, are forced to cut the living standards of their workers. This is because the costs of the state are paid for out of profits, and the cause of the crisis is the fall in the rate of profit. Socialists stand for the "smashing" (Lenin) of the capitalist state. Militant rejects this in practice.

In so word, it is reformist.

Secondly, and more importantly, Militant is state capitalist. It propagates the ideology

It also includes Her Majesty's Opposition - Labour. The Labour Party and the Trades unions are just as sacred of the working class as the Tories and police. When Herring's leader - Bernie Grant said that the police had received a "bloody good hiding" he was immediately denounced by Kinnoch and Hattersley. he quickly took his words back since the last a budding MP like him wanted was a conflict with Kinnoch. A resolution by the Council's Labour Group was passed with Grant's full approval, condemning the violence.

Mr Grant's initial anti-police sentiments had however enraged the TMOU and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE). They said their members out (without a ballot) on a 1 day strike and demonstration. The National & Local Government Officers Association urged members to vote for a resolution "unreservedly condemning the violence".

Although the ruling class has tried very hard to deny any link between these "riots" and those of 1981, it is clear that the difference is one of intensity only. As we said in 1981, the main reasons behind the revolts were unemployment and police harassment of neighbourhoods. Today, unemployment is worse than ever. Official unemployment in the Lorcels Road area of Birmingham is 60%. Fewer than 5 out of 100 black youths leaving Handsworth schools this summer had found jobs 6 months later. Bristol is the same. Lambeth has male unemployment at 27% whilst on Broadwater

that nationalisations represent steps towards socialism, instead of recognising that they are merely a formalisation of the relations already existing between the capitalist state and industrial and financial concerns. There is no need for the conscious activity of the working class in this vision of "socialism", and Militant's present activity reflects this. It sees working class activity as being switched on and off like a tap, and the class' political role is restricted to supporting Militant.

Communists, on the other hand, fight for a politically conscious and active working class. Starting in the here and now, the CWU works to build communist factory groups (see our Factory Group Platform - available from the group address) to provide a link between the class and its political expression, and we argue for mass meetings to organise the class' struggles. These mass meetings, and committees elected by them, prefigure the Soviet State and its central organs in many ways. Both the mass meetings and the Soviets elect recallable delegates to their central bodies. Both have to involve the widest possible section of the workers in order to be effective in conducting the class struggle and increasing working class consciousness, which is really an aspect of the same thing. And the attitude of the CWU and our comrades in the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party to both is the same: they constitute an arena for class struggle as well as being a weapon in that struggle; unless communists win the political fight within them their effectiveness in the class struggle will be impaired. In the case of the Soviets, they will be unable to fulfil their potential for forming a proletarian state, as the example of the German socialist shows.

MILITANT AND THE SWP

Militant's reformist and state capitalist policies raise the following question: Why does the Socialist Workers Party, which claims to reject reformism ("The present system cannot be patched up or reformed... it has to be overthrown.") - Where We Stand column inside every Socialist Worker] and to be able to distinguish between state capitalism and socialism ("Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but capitalist"), want to form a joint organisation with Militant?

An answer can be found in the SWP's Central Committee's letter to its members. Replying to the rhetorical question, "Are we serious about wanting a joint organisation?", the

Farm Estate in Tottenham 47% of adults and 90% of youth are out of work. Unemployment isn't just Tory inflicted. Under the last Labour Government unemployment tripled. Unemployment is the product of capitalism's need to solve its crisis by cutting wages. A large "reserve army of labour" [Marx] is the best way to threaten those in work into accepting wage cuts and worsening working conditions. To hammer this home dose cuts and harsher Social Security conditions are being introduced in order to make life on the dole even grimmer. But so the state isn't facing a defeated and passive class it knows it will need to strengthen its apparatus of repression. The Home Secretary has no illusions about getting rid of the causes of unrest. he has rejected all calls for an inquiry. As he pointed out, "Inquiries don't stop riots".

The capitalists are clearly preparing themselves for future battles with the unemployed, so also need to be prepared. Unemployed youths learned a lot about tactics in street warfare. They were able to use their knowledge of their own neighbourhoods to attack police and use petrol stations as a source of fuel for bombs. But in the end, the ruling class has to be attacked politically.

Unlike the revolts of the last few weeks, this isn't a short-term response but it is a sure road to future success. Looting and

SWP's CC says "We are serious about wanting such an organisation because the needs of the working class struggle demand that as many socialists as possible refuse to knuckle under to Kinnoch, and the best way to ensure this would be a united organisation. Here this to exist, it would not only combine the existing membership of Militant and the SWP, it would also provide a fighting pole of attraction to many other socialists(!) -- So the call for unity is not just a manoeuvre, if by that is meant a simple opportunist trick. (Our emphasis) Aside from the absurdity of thinking that socialists could "knuckle under to Kinnoch", what is striking about this is the absence of any discussion of politics - would the joint organisation combine the existing policies of Militant and the SWP? The rest of the letter does not answer this question. In fact it specifically refuses to answer it. In answer to, "members of the Labour left ask how such a united organisation would function, what its policies (our emphasis) would be, and so on. What is our reply?" - we read: "It would be absurd (!) to get involved in long arguments about an organisation which the Militant leadership are opposed to forming". This refusal to discuss "policies" in the context of "left unity" with a reformist, state capitalist organisation can only lead to the conclusion that the SWP's opposition to reformism and state capitalist boils down to "just a manoeuvre", the effect of which is to draw potential socialists into reformist campaigns for state capitalism.

"SOCIALIST" REINDEERINGS

As we go to press the manoeuvring amongst Labour Party factions continues. What is certain is that all factions have nothing to offer but another attack on working class living standards. No job with Militant or higher rents and rates with Kinnoch are all Labour has to offer. The working class in Liverpool can fight these attacks only to the extent that they see through the "socialism" of the council and overcome the divisions between council workers and workers employed in private and nationalised firms in Liverpool and elsewhere. That is, they should strike against the council as well as the government and seek to spread the strike to workers confronting different capitalists or capitalist agencies, but who are confronting the same capitalism. This is what communists fight for in Liverpool, as elsewhere, not unity with the administrators of the capitalist state.

Spontaneous revolts won't in themselves change anything. They must be linked with the struggles of other workers. Some unemployed workers have already shown the way here by joining picket lines during the miners' strike. This needs to be repeated everywhere, especially in situations where the bosses are trying to recruit blacklegs directly from the dole queues as they tried to do in the British Rail guards' strike in the summer.

But this is not the only area of activity. Unemployed workers don't have money but they do have time. As we stated in a recent leaflet:

"We can use this time to form unemployed workers' groups which can become centres of debate and education about the capitalist crisis and the revolutionary alternative."

In the immediate term such groups can organise opposition to the state's attempts to cut dole and benefit payments by, for example, mass occupations of Social Security offices and they can organise support for victims of evictions and fuel cut-offs. Such campaigns are essential to break the isolation and feeling of powerlessness which many on the dole feel. But this activity won't be really meaningful until it is part of a wider political education and a movement to form an international workers' party which will give to all workers, employed and unemployed, a programme for the future.

1945: A NEW IMPERIAL

PART ONE THE RISE AI

As Gorbachov and Reagan prepare to meet next month to arbitrate on the fate of the world the political hacks whose job it is to whip up our enthusiasm for gatherings of the great are noticeably unenthusiastic. Having seen the failure of the "peaceful co-existence" and detente eras they know that what has driven the superpowers to the negotiating table is the world economic crisis. Unlike previous discussions this meeting does not even pretend to be about preserving peace, it is more about how to preserve capitalist rule both East and West. In both cases the need to reduce arms expenditure which is crippling their economies (the USSR badly needs investment in agriculture, the USA has to attempt to cut its budget deficit) has been a powerful incentive to talk.

On the fortieth anniversary of imperialism's divisions of the spoils of war we are beginning a two part article which analyses the nature of imperialist domination either side of the Iron Curtain, showing how the forces that enabled the superpowers to maintain an uneasy peace are neither immutable nor everlasting. In this first part we look at how Western bloc hopes of abolishing capitalist crises and wars forever by waving the magic Keynesian wand have collapsed.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER

Forty years ago, on 27th December 1945, representatives from thirty countries attended a signing ceremony in Washington to mark the formal establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The existence of these now-familiar international economic institutions was the result of the 1944 agreement at Bretton Woods between the US and her allies, principally Britain, to eliminate what Keynes and other like-minded economists saw as the underlying cause of capitalist war. Bretton Woods was to inaugurate a new international economic order: an era of stable and peaceful capitalist development which would proceed until, in the words of Keynes the "Last Historical" owner a Rolls-Royce car". With this vision of a golden future came the Bretton Woods withword of "never again". "Never again would there be mass unemployment. "Never again would international trade be restricted by protectionist "beggar-neighbour" policies on the part of individual states. "Never again" would the world economy (at least in the Western-dominated part) be allowed to slide into a recession of 1939 proportions. Instead an international fund of quotas from members' currencies would be established, then any particular government found itself with "balance of payments problems" (i.e. unable to pay for imports) it would be able to draw on the currency required from the fund. All currencies would be fully convertible with each other in order to avoid the erratic exchange rates of the inter-war years created by attempts to maintain preferential trading areas. In Keynes' original vision the IMF was to create its own currency to ease the flow of international trade and avoid any one national currency gaining the power of a world currency.

From the outset the glossy ideals of Bretton Woods were in marked contrast to reality. In December 1945 that reality was a world ruined and devastated by war in which the USA had emerged as by far the strongest imperialism. By the end of the war the US controlled 70% of the world's financial assets; more than half the world's manufactured goods and three of all the world's goods were produced in the USA. During the war total merchant shipping tonnage had increased and by 1945 the US owned half of it (compared with 14% in 1939). In 1947 one third of world exports came from the US which itself only imported one tenth of global imports. From this situation it was inevitable that the dollar would

become the universal currency in which all international trade was done.

The first post-war economic crisis sprang from the inability of states bankrupted by war to pay for goods from the USA - the main source of supply. Economists euphemistically called this the "dollar shortage". In this "dollar shortage" lay the material roots of the "Cold War". Whilst the USSR was looting East Germany, Austria and Manchuria to rector its war-shattered economy the USA was faced with the prospect that its share of the spoils was so devastated by war that it would not only fail to supply the market the mismatched US productive capacity needed, but would even "go Communist". Bitter class struggles raged throughout Western Europe and Japan in the immediate aftermath of the war. In Western Europe the beneficiaries were the Italian and French pro-Russian, so-called Communist Parties. If Italy, Greece and France went the way of eastern Europe then even more markets would disappear behind the Iron Curtain of non-convertible currencies. Marshall Aid was thus not the product of philanthropic desire as US propaganda at the time made out. It was a crying need of the US economy itself. This affected the subsequent history of the USA and Europe more than any other factor and explains its military commitment to that area today.

As far as Britain was concerned the process of its replacement as the leading imperialist power was further accelerated by the war. In the early war years, for instance, the USA replaced Britain as the major investor in Argentina and raised its ownership of Iranian oil to one-third of its Anglo-Saxon ally. During the war the British balance of payments deficit was left in abeyance while the debts to the USA piled up. After the war, even before the signing of the Bretton Woods agreement, a further Anglo-American loan was agreed and added to Britain's existing debts to the USA.

When the IMF was formed it was thus far from a society of equals helping to tide one another over through periods of trade imbalances. From the start it was controlled by the US while its other members were obliged to go cap in hand for dollars in order to survive. (After only one year it had lent \$340 million.) The West European states were in much the same position vis-a-vis the US as some of the "least developed nations" today: they not only had no alternative but to borrow but at the same time the frenetic attempt to earn dollars via exports (to pay for much-needed "reconstruction" goods as well as to pay back loans and avoid further loans) meant lowering the living standards of the local working class. In Britain, for example, rationing increased after the war (e.g. bread was rationed for the first time) while, despite the Labour Government's pledge to reduce working hours, the 48 hour week remained in force. And just as today, US loans were not made for humanitarian motives. They came with economic and political strings attached. In the case of Britain these strings always involved further steps towards wiping out any preferential trade with the colonies and the abandonment of the sterling area through convertible currency agreements. As our comrades of the Internationalist Communist Party (ICP) in Italy wrote at the time:

"The war ... has accelerated the process of industrialisation of colonial and semi-colonial countries, many of which moreover are being pushed into the economic orbit of the US, thus putting Britain even more in debt to the USA. It has forced Britain to submit to the demands of political economy such as the recent huge loan agreed with Wall Street which served exclusively to blacken the British into renouncing their system of imperial preference within the sterling area. This now allows the members of the latter the freedom to spend their dollars and pounds where they think best rather than being blocked by London." (Frontline Year 1 #2 August 1946; p.76)

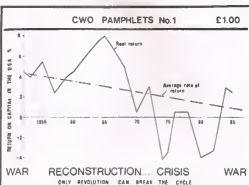
As the strongest imperialist power, worldwide free trade was in the interests of the US and went in parallel with its hypocritical championing of "the end of Empire" and decolonisation - i.e. the opening up of the old European empires to US monopoly capitalism. And just as today US policy and strategic interests influence its economic policy, so in the late 1940's they were the impetus to the setting up of Marshall Aid and the "European Recovery Programme" (1948-52). By April 1948 the IMF had all but run out of funds but US disney at the economic weakness of Europe, the danger of rising class struggle and the growing strength of local pro-Russian parties prompted Truman to ask for immediate \$400 worth of "aid" for Greece and Turkey and Congress to pass the "Foreign Assistance Act" in the same month. Naturally the ERM was accompanied by measures to extend "free" trade and currency convertibility. The IMF retired from the scene while the US proceeded to eliminate imperial preference and work for full convertibility of West European currencies against the dollar.

THE POST-WAR BOOM AND THE HIGH SUMMER OF BREITON WOODS

By 1948-50 production in the economies of Western Europe had gone beyond that of 1939. Capital's accumulation cycle was once more underway. For the world economy 1955-64 was the fastest period of economic growth in history.

With the outbreak of the Korean War the US extended its aid policy beyond Europe and to "less developed" countries in strategic positions. Thus, the ERM gave way to the Mutual Security Programme which, between 1952-59, directed \$9.1 billion to Middle East and Far East countries flanking Russia or China. As one bourgeois economist explained:

"The determination that after 1950 the United States should withdraw from the aid field was abandoned for non-economic reasons - the realization that American political and military alliances would have to be cemented by liberal applications of dollars and that uncommitted countries would have to be wooed by this means lest they succumb to Soviet blandishments." (John Scarewell The International Economy Since 1945)



THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF CAPITALIST DECADENCE & MONEY, CREDIT AND CRISIS

COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION

ALIST WORLD ORDER

Y FALL OF BRETTON WOODS

Between 1945 and 1960 over sixty ex-colonial countries achieved formal independence. The cost of US military and financial "booting" of these and its established allies led to a US balance of payments deficit by the end of the 50's: a deficit which has kept on growing ever since. In 1960, however, profit rates were still expanding and the US deficit was not seen as a problem but rather as helping to overcome "the dollar shortage" in Europe.

The recovery of Europe and the opening up of the "newly industrialising countries" to foreign capital allowed US and Western firms in general to expand their capital base and reap extra-profits from areas with a lower organic composition (i.e. more labour intensive areas) where labour is cheap and the rate of surplus-value is high. By 1970 direct foreign investment by firms in the leading countries of the Western bloc accounted for 75% of their capital exports. US investment accounts for about 60% of the total today, with just over a quarter invested in the "developing" areas. The growth of the multi-nationals in the post-war cycle is testimony to the enormous growth in the organic composition of capital and the underlying reason for the decline in profit rates which must eventually accompany such growth.

In the 50's and early 60's however, the rate of profit was still increasing while imperialism looked to the "developing countries" as a source of further capital accumulation. By 1959 the Bretton Woods' sin of currency convertibility was reached. The US dollar was now the key currency in the world economy against which the value of all other goods was measured. The exchange rate of each currency was fixed in relation to the dollar and thereby to each other. The dollar itself was fixed against gold (35\$ per ounce). The financial mechanisms envisaged at Bretton Woods could now come into their own. Although the IMF still lent to the metropolitan states (e.g. Britain 1962, 4.6\$ and the US itself in 1964) the greater part of its activity was directed to the "under-developed" states. While the World Bank offered loans for long-term infrastructure projects the IMF's role was to provide short-term finance to ease balance of payments deficits. The conditions attached to loans from both these and other similar agencies ensured that they operated firmly to the advantage of Western imperialism. For example, Agency for International Development (AID) loans are tied to purchases of goods in the US. The conditions attached to IMF loans became notorious. The Fund's invariable solution to balance of payments problems was (and is) to demand a reduction in domestic demand (i.e. in the consumption of the local working population) and devaluation of local currencies (thus increasing the cost of living via higher prices for imported goods). Also, IMF agreements always conclude with the stipulation that the government in question must not introduce new exchange or import controls. Unlike old-style European colonialism, US imperialism's domination under the banner of "free trade" means that the 3rd World "countries" have no chance to develop their industries behind the closed doors of tariffs. And in fact the carving up of the world economy between the two imperialist blocs meant that even at the height of the post-war boom there was no possibility of an "under-developed" state escaping imperialist domination. On the contrary, during the late 50's and 60's - the period of great growth in the heartlands of imperialism - the relative position of the "newly industrialising countries" worsened. By 1960 two-thirds of world trade was in the hands of metropolitan countries; the cost of servicing debts for the peripheral states rose by 17% from 1957-67 while the gap between the per capita income of these states and the metropolises widened dramatically. But while bourgeois economists refused to contemplate the possibility of future crisis for the world economy and instead discussed the elements necessary for "under-developed" states

to reach take-off point for full industrialisation, the seeds of future crisis were already sprouting.

Throughout the Sixties, the US balance of payments deficit grew and with it the US experienced a drain on its gold reserves. By the end of the Sixties the rising cost of the Vietnam War emphasised that the cost of US capital and military outlays abroad could not be met by her current account surplus - in other words there was not enough surplus value to provide for the demands of US imperialism. The growing dearth of surplus value was reflected in the fortunes of the IMF and its constant search to improve "international liquidity". In 1961 the General Agreements to Borrow (GAB) enabled the IMF itself to borrow from banks the currencies of its ten strongest members. In effect this meant spreading the burden of financing Western imperialism as well as consolidating the hold of the richest states over the periphery through their increased voting rights in the IMF. In 1966 the quotas allocated to all members were increased but still the "liquidity shortage" persisted. In 1967 (the year sterling was devalued by 14%) the IMF resorted to printing its own money and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were issued for the first time. In true Keynesian spirit the IMF sought to print its way out of crisis: the SDRs in fact are the nearest thing to the "hancor" units envisaged in Keynes' scheme for an international currency. When such money is printed without an equivalent increase in available surplus value the result can only be increased inflation.

By then, 60's capitalism's post-war boom had reached its peak and the rate of profit (roughly the ratio of business returns to the cost of capital outlay) began to decline, just as it had in previous cycles. Capitalism was about to enter another period of global crisis as an ever-higher portion of profits (i.e. surplus value produced by the working class) was needed for new investments in expensive machinery and plant. For US capitalism, huge overseas military and financial commitments, this contributed to the growing balance of payments deficit which reached crisis proportions with the Vietnam War. Even though the dollar was the most important currency in the world economy, US capital was not generating enough surplus value to finance its non-productive spending, especially its military spending. In 1967 sterling had collapsed, adding to the lack of confidence in the dollar. The age-old stereotype of capitalists to a weak currency is to demand payment in gold. Throughout the Sixties US gold reserves drained away. By 1967 it was no longer possible for the US to manipulate international financial mechanisms to maintain the official price of gold. By 1971 that price had risen and US gold reserves were less than enough to last five years. In that year Nixon severed the official dollar link with gold as a way of preventing a further drain on US reserves (the dollar price of gold went up and the dollar was in effect devalued by 8%). By this arbitrary act, totally against the founding principles of Bretton Woods, the whole basis of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange system crumbled. Once the dollar was no longer convertible at a fixed rate to gold the linking of other currencies to the dollar only meant their being linked to the fluctuations of the dollar.

By devaluing the dollar, the principle unit of international financial transactions, the US was signalling its intention that before the US would face austerity and cuts the Western bloc would have to pay for the crisis. Bretton Woods went by the board as soon as the US economy was threatened. Under the threat of a trade war (the US placed a 10% surcharge on imports from "certain countries") the US "persuaded" its Group of Ten allies to realign their currencies in accordance with the newly valued dollar. In 1973 the dollar was further devalued and this "adjustable peg" system was abandoned for floating exchange rates. Today the Group

of Ten are thrashing about, trying to put some order into this monetary chaos by finding some other way of getting fixed rates.

ONCE AGAIN IN CRISIS

But the era of apparent stability has gone. 1971 marked a watershed in post-war history. Not only did it end the Cold War as first Nixon and then Carter tried to solve the West's accumulation problems by going behind the Iron Curtain, but it also brought havoc for the international currency system. The breakdown of currency convertibility was in fact the financial consequence of a deeper crisis: the crisis of the falling rate of profit and subsequent lack of a sufficient mass of surplus value which has inevitably followed the boom and from which there is no escape for imperialism without another world war. The full currency convertibility envisaged by Bretton Woods as a guarantee of international economic stability lasted little more than ten years (1959-71). Much less a means of overcoming economic crisis, one of the central tenets of Bretton Woods has proved to be possible only in periods of rapid growth. But what of other Bretton Woods ideals and institutions?

The IMF. In the face of the unmanageable amount of "3rd World" debts (\$800 billion last year) the resources of the IMF - not for the first time - are proving unequal to the task of bailing out bankrupt states. Increasing members' quotas, creating more SDRs are not enough. This year, for the first time since 1977, the IMF is in arrears by 30\$ SDRs. But 1985 is not 1984 when the US stepped in with Marshall Aid to Europe. The system of drawing surplus value from the strongest economies to help the weak doesn't work when the strongest state is the world's biggest debtor (\$130 billion in 1984). As a creditor the IMF is notorious for imposing harsh conditions which only worsen the lot of the local populations. During the Seventies the IMF took a back-ground role as many governments sought to avoid the strict terms of IMF loans by borrowing from private banks (who generously "recycled" OPEC oil surpluses). But the debts still piled up and the banks themselves faced collapse. Now they are reluctant to lend without IMF or World Bank backing. So once again the IMF tries to do the impossible: impose currency regulations and austerity measures which will allow the countries hardest hit by the crisis to "balance their books" without hurting the interests of US imperialism. As one writer for that stalwart of Western imperialism, the Financial Times, put it:

"The USA is one debtor which the Fund seems powerless to influence: hence the IMF is increasingly seen ... not as an adjustment agency, but as a debt collector for Western and predominantly American banks." [25.9.85]

Today's IMF loan conditions are even more fierce, often involving removal of state subsidies on staple foodstuffs. For countries like Egypt, Tunisia and in Latin America the Eighties have become the decade of IMF.

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DECEMBER 1905 A WORKERS RISING IN RUSSIA

The events of the 1905 Revolution in Russia are rightly noted for one of the most significant products of a workers revolution in history - the formation of the St. Petersburg Soviet (or workers council). Formed as a result of the need to coordinate the workers forces in the heat of a printers/strikers strike, it soon grew to represent 200,000 of the half million workers in the city. In all it lasted fifty days and was soon initiated in other Russian cities, most importantly in Moscow. Here the Soviet of Workers Deputies represented 100,000 workers. Like all the other soviets it was a directly elected body in which the workers who were delegated to it were also instantly recallable by the workers who elected them. This enormous political advance however was not to be the only note to emerge from the experience of 1905.

When the Tsarist state moved against the Soviet in St Petersburg (on Dec. 3rd) the Moscow workers refused to be cowed by the appearance of 15,000 troops and proclaimed a political general strike. The strike in St. Petersburg at the same time soon collapsed because "this time it was not a matter of a strike demonstration but of a life or death struggle" (Trotsky). The Moscow workers however took up the challenge. Not least among the reasons for the greater combativity of the workers in Moscow at this time was the fact that, unlike Petersburg, they supported the Bolsheviks. December 1905, more than any other event was to demonstrate the essentially bourgeois nature of Menshevism as well as the revolutionary temper of Bolshevism.

Whilst all other European Social Democratic Parties considered insurrection to be only an ultimate threat to be shaken at the bourgeoisie, the Bolsheviks used their very existence to the insistence on the absolute need for armed overthrow of the ruling class. Even before Bolsheviks existed Lenin had written of the need for the political vanguard to take itself and to "develop the ability to select the proper moment for the uprising." As soon as news of "Bloody Sunday" (the fomenting of hundreds of peaceful demonstrators in January, 1905) reached Lenin he began to study the military writings of Leonidas Sotirides (the General of the Paris Commune) and Engels. Soon he was flooding his comrades with advice on the arming of the class and the formation of armed detachments. Whilst a Bolshevik May Day leaflet of the time called for workers to "form fighting



MOSCOW - December 1905
squads, get what weapons you can", Lenin was soon announcing that the lack of concrete preparation "horrified" him.

That had been in October 1905 but when the insurrection was finally called on December 10th only a few workers had been armed. At first the Soviet ordered the building of the traditional barricades but like bourgeois generals they were fighting previous battles of the class war rather than the battle of 1905. Barricades simply provided targets for modern artillery and the proletariat was forced into adopting new tactics. The struggle changed into an urban guerrilla war in which small detachments of 2 or 3 *dushiminki* sniped at the troops (sitting always at the officers) and then melted away into the working class districts of Presnya. In this way 800 armed socialists kept 15,000 troops at bay for over a week. During this time the attempt by workers to fraternise with the troops were on the point of success. Many regiments (including the Cossacks) refused to fire on demonstrators and the saboteur, commander telegraphed Petersburg that two-thirds of his men were unreliable. However the slow start to the railwaymen's strike allowed the Government to send in fresh, loyal troops to reconquer the city. By the 19th the Moscow Soviet was forced to call off the struggle which had only been echoed in Kharkov. A thousand workers had died.

"LESSONS OF THE MOSCOW UPRISING"

"The proletariat sensed sooner than its leaders the change in the objective condition of the struggle and the need for a transition from the strike to the uprising. As is always the case practice marched ahead of theory. As peaceful strikes and demonstrations immediately ceased to satisfy the workers they asked: What is to be done next? And they demanded more resolute action...we, the leaders of the Social-Democratic proletariat were like a commander-in-chief who has deployed his troops in such a way that most of them took no active part in the battle." (Collected works 11)

Like Marx, Lenin recognised that the military preparations of the proletariat must be at least as political as technical. He called for the formation of Combat Committees whose functions would not only be to form small detachments but also to propagandise as widely as possible "a direct, brief, direct and simple plan" which could be carried out by as many workers as possible. In this he recognised the need for local initiative telling his supporters "do not wait for our help" and condemning "the semite fear of initiative".

Lenin also advocated the winning over of the troops but not simply in the passive way the Mensheviks wanted, by simple persuasion. He recognised that the struggle to demoralise the troops into fraternisation was a physical one which would involve both armed struggle and mass propaganda. However the most serious issue which showed the different directions which Bolshevik and Menshevism were already taking was over the fundamental nature of the 1905 insurrection itself. Although the Moscow Bolsheviks had supported the call for the uprising in 1905 after the event they had second thoughts. Whilst Plekhanov was arguing that the Moscow Soviet "should not have taken to arms" Lenin repeated his view that the only mistake the workers made was in not being well enough prepared and in not going on the offensive soon enough. For Plekhanov and the Mensheviks "political strikes" were in themselves enough to win victory but for Lenin they were only another step on the road to direct confrontation with the state. Ultimately he argued "We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed the fact from the masses that the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action" Eighty years later it may be difficult to foresee when the "coming revolutionary action" will occur but as no ruling class in history has yet yielded up power without a struggle the lessons of the Moscow rising remain equally relevant today.

Review KLEBANOV AND NIKITIN

A minor detail, John Cunningham wrote this pamphlet for two reasons. The first was because in "Cases of persecution ... an internationally known scientist or writer has more chance of getting his or her case publicised ... than does a street cleaner or a miner."

The story of the heroism of Klebanov and Nikitin is a depressing one but it needs to be told. Both are miners who tried to improve working conditions inside "Soviet" Russia. Klebanov has been struggling since 1959 but nothing has been heard of him since 1982 whilst Nikitin has died as a result of the barbaric treatment he received in psychiatric hospitals over a decade and a half of struggle. The booklet is valuable for the picture it gives of the vast arsenal of techniques at the disposal of the state to instil discipline (and, depending upon housing as well as jobs) which only underlines the heroism of the struggles of Klebanov and Nikitin, and other workers like them.

But John Cunningham's booklet is also a response to the experience he had in campaigning for the two men in Britain. He not only discovered that "The UK simply accepted the Soviet version of events..." (i.e. that the two men were indeed mad) but found that the officials of his own union accused him of being (by implication) an agent of US imperialism. Arthur Scargill wrote to him that he did not show any concern "about the tragedy in El Salvador and Nicaragua where more people are dying in a day than have been killed in the Soviet Union in the last ten years". Cunningham puts all this political dishonesty down to "sheer bureaucratic inertia" on the one hand and to "the legacy of Stalinism still clinging to the Labour Movement" on the other. From his booklet (half of which is in correspondence with leading Labourites) we get the impression that many in the so-called Labour Movement would like to give him the same treatment as Nikitin and Klebanov. He polemically puts into the words the fear of isolation felt by many workers when faced with the meat tactics of Scargill et al.

"Many people, quite rightly, do not want to be identified, or even risk identification, with the likes of Reagan and Thatcher, as they do not take up the question of repression in the USSR..."

RUSSIA IS CAPITALIST

Cunningham's dilemma is not strange to communists. To argue in the present situation for a genuinely socialist political programme invites jibes from those who are "socialist" in name only about being anti. But as he says the working class can only be armed in the struggle for socialism if it recognises that, despite the workers revolution of 1917, Russia and the Eastern bloc countries are today not socialist. There he is wrong in to suppose that Scargill or any other trades union leader has any other conception of socialism than one where huge state organs direct the working class. Far from seeing comrades as a "society of freely-associated producers" run by the workers themselves Russia is their conception of a socialist state. This is also a problem for John Cunningham who sees that Russia is not socialist but cannot say what it is. However in his pamphlet does Cunningham show that the law of value also determines the production and distribution of material product in the USSR just as it does in the West. What Klebanov faced was not just "oppression" like the other disfigurement of the Saboteur would but the universal capitalist evil of exploitation in its crudest and cruelest form.

"FREE" TRADE UNIONS OR POLITICAL STRUGGLE

His other error regards trades unions. Whilst he correctly states that "The Soviet trades union plays the role of the Ministry of Labour" he doesn't recognise that in the East (its obvious whose side the unions are on but here the problem is more complicated) workers in the last century to defend their immediate, economic interests. They were never revolutionary. However we have reached a situation where capitalism has nothing left to offer the working class in terms of lasting reforms and thus the unions have no role to

play other than to obstruct the struggle against capitalism itself by keeping the workers locked up in separate, sectional struggles rather than uniting against the state. Because unions exist to negotiate the price of wage-labour they are bound up with the continued existence of the wage-labour system, capitalism. Today they cannot even defend the immediate interests of the workers as the recent events in the mining, steel and railway industries dramatically show. What is required today is a struggle of the whole class against the total power of the capitalist state. Unions are still arguing for a bigger share of crumbs but it is now time to take over the bakery. But the problem of the unions is also beginning to affect workers in the Eastern bloc. Nikitin and Klebanov each wanted a "free" trades union but found that to raise such a question in Russia becomes immediately a political question. But free trades unions as a demand in the Polish events of August 1980 was shown to be a new form of stabilisation for the Polish state. When Polish workers were developing new forms of struggle and combining their activities via country-wide strike committees they posed a real threat to the Polish state but once Solidarnosc was formed on a national platform the movement lost its focus and today Solidarnosc has not only given the Polish state the chance to recover but has become another nationalist barrier and nationalist barrier to the creation of a genuinely socialist state in Poland. The lesson is thus the same East and West. The relative atrophy of capitalist crisis cannot be fought at an economic level where unions can negotiate away the gains of the struggle but, as John Cunningham found in practice there is no such thing as a "trades union matter" any more since every struggle assumes a political aspect. It is just as Marx said over a hundred years ago, we now have to replace the trades union motto "A fair day's pay for a fair day's work" with the communist slogan "Abolition of the wage system". This can only come about if those like John Cunningham who came to recognise the anti-working class nature of the USSR also recognise the vested interests the so-called present-day Labour Movement has in capitalism and join us in the fight for an international party of the working class.

Booklet available from J Cunningham c/o 12 Chelfont Road, Oxford. (£1 plus postage)

"hungry" riots. Some countries, like Vietnam and Guyana have been declared ineligible to use the Fund's general resources. So much for the IMF as an agent of "international equilibrium".

The World Bank: the sister of the IMF. In the face of mounting hostility by debtor states to IMF conditions, US imperialism is now turning to the World Bank - which lends out for longer term projects and whose loan terms involve less immediate demands on the state in question. This new emphasis on the World Bank shows that Western imperialism now recognises that the IMF conditions are impossible to fulfil. It hopes that World Bank "backing" will encourage private banks to tend to solve what it now regards as a long-term problem. But for countries already crippled by interest rates, more loans are simply like throwing water on a drowning man.

Free Trade and an End to Protection. While the spectre of 1930's trade wars impels the leading members of the Western bloc to curb their natural instinct to impose tariff barriers and the like (e.g. Reagan's recent opposition to Congress's protectionist moves to offset the loss of US export markets), the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) is seen by the weaker states for what it is: a "rich man's club". In terms of the relationship between the imperialist heartlands and the peripheral states there is a steady increase in protectionism. Throughout the whole post-war period the metropolitan countries have never allowed free entry of food or the majority of manufactured goods from the "developing" countries, the extent to which GATT operates as a tool of imperialism was revealed in this year's UNCTAD (United Nations Committee on Trade and Development) Report which explains that one-third of the exports of "poor countries" are subject to protection. If protectionism were abandoned by the metropolises no less than 65% of the weaker states' most important manufactured goods would increase their earnings by as much as 85% of the total world debt (\$700 billion). - a simple, but for imperialism, unthinkable way of reducing the debt burden. The Bretton Woods pretence of free trade is in fact a cynical weapon of imperialism.

The Ideal of Full Employment to which all Bretton Woods signatories are committed. Whatever happened to this? With over 20 million officially unemployed in Western Europe alone the Bretton Woods Ideal is seen to be nothing but a myth.

Prosperity and Economic Development. The formal political independence which came with the end of colonialism has neither led to economic development nor allowed the former colonies to escape the thrall of imperialism. The per capita income of the populations of these countries continues to decline (for the poorest countries by 20% from 1960) and the world's starving are now counted in millions. The sight of a pop singer dishing out "aid" to starving Africans is a far cry from Keynes' mass vision of every hottenot with a Rolls Royce but it is such more symbolic of the reality of the post-war "development".

But in the imperialist heartlands too prosperity is a thing of the past. Since the beginning of the Sixties living standards in Europe and even in the US have been falling. Today capitalism's financial experts talk openly of the recession (it cannot be denied). Ten years ago they said it was impossible. At Bretton Woods they said "never again".

World War. Keynes was right to see economic crisis as the cause of war. What he and others at Bretton Woods could never see was that it is impossible to create financial mechanisms which will overcome something which is endemic to the system: periodic crisis leading, in our epoch, to global war.

(to be continued)

* An analysis of the USSR's role in Eastern Europe will appear in the second half of this article - in VZV2.
** See also the follow up to this article for the political economy of "detente".

CWO AGM REPORT

In September the CWO held its annual national meeting in London, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of its foundation, and in the meanwhile public some of the themes of the discussion, which are of more general interest.

The report of the Executive Committee of the organisation noted that our economic perspectives, outlined in *Communist Review* 2 were being confirmed by the slow down in the US economy, supposed locomotive of recovery for the entire western capitalist bloc. Our analysis was that the US "recovery" was based on high budget deficits, which led to high interest rates, and a tax on the rest of the world economy, none of which could continue indefinitely. A grisly counterpoint to the chorus of hosannas to the capitalist "recovery" was the famine in Africa, and semi-famine conditions in parts of South America, which gave the lie to the myths of better days ahead. There will be no generalising capitalist economic recovery, but neither is the collapse of capitalism imminent; the pattern for the immediate future is of recessionary slumps, punctuated by increasingly weak mini-booms.

If the economic crisis still has some way to go, the same is true for the class struggle. In parallel with the end of economic "recovery", the curve of class struggle has continued to rise. The continuing upheavals in the semi-developed peripheral areas, such as India and the Philippines, is being increasingly matched by intensification of struggle in the capitalist heartlands, viz., the miners strike in Britain, and the mass strikes in the low countries and Scandinavia, hitherto oases of class peace. But the EC's attitude against any euphoria: these movements remain limited by sectional, nationalist and trade unionist perspectives, and the class has yet to fight on its own real terrain. We are not on the verge of decisive class confrontations, or in a pre-revolutionary situation. This recognition marks an awareness that the strikes of the later 1960s (France, Italy etc.) were not the qualitative breaks from the class struggles since 1945, but rather intensifications of the existing struggle on a quantitative basis.

The discussion on the group's press led to certain important decisions being taken. In keeping with a modest increase in its forces, the CWO now feels it has the capacity to increase the periodicity of its publication, *Workers Voice*, from its present 6, to 8 or 9 issues per year. From 1966. It was also decided that, while maintaining its theoretical and international slant, the paper would function better as an organ for the group. If it devoted proportionately more space to aspects of the crisis and class struggle in Britain, and this will be the case in the coming issues.

It was also decided that, with the approximation of our positions to those of the comrades of the Internationalist Communist Party (P.C.I.), in future the organ of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, *Communist Review* would function as the theoretical journal of the CWO, and that after the forthcoming issue, *Revolutionary Perspectives*, would be discontinued. The latter had been our theoretical organ for a decade, and had overseen our development from our origins in the politics of the German Left, to our present identification with those of the Italian Leftist that sense it had fulfilled its purpose, and the existence of two theoretical papers was a luxury. To supplement the work of C.B., the organisation intends to continue the pamphlet series begun with the appearance of our first, on economics. A further proposal of the E.C., to change the name of the organisation was defeated, since the members felt that the resultant confusion would outweigh any political advantages in detaching our last, semantic, link with the German Left: our politics were not in our name, but in what we published.

The meeting also addressed itself to the production of a balance sheet on our interventions in the miners strike, the biggest moment in the class struggle in Britain since 1926, and our biggest test as an organisation. On a practical level, the EC and the group as a whole, felt there was room for some satisfaction. Our tiny organisation had intervened over the whole strike with a steady stream of leaflets, averaging one a fortnight, stepped

up U.V. sales (up 50%), organised public meetings in many strike areas, and taken physical part in picketing, demonstrations, etc. Though we did recruit any miners, our activity during the strike helped to bring closer to us contacts convinced of the importance of our interventions.

The meeting re-affirmed the general analysis made of the strike by the organisation, viz. our criticism of the Labour Party and NUM role, our appreciation of the significance of the class violence during the strike, and in our demands and strategies for extending the strike, which evaded the vagaries of abstract generalisations, by linking the concrete situation of moments in the strike, to the general needs of extension. But as the dust settled, it was also felt that, in the heat of the struggle, the organisation had overstressed the historical significance of the British miners' strike, while correctly rejecting the idea that this was "just another strike", and realising its importance in the evolution of the balance of forces, our analysis went too much the other way. This was not a defeat for the whole working class of historical proportions, since the whole working class was not engaged, and neither was the struggle fought on the class' own terrain. Neither was the outcome of the strike an unmitigated disaster for the miners - though it was a defeat-witness the continuing ability of certain sections to put up a rearguard fight, which indicates a lack of abject demoralisation.

On a general level, it was felt that our over estimation of the significance of the strike stemmed from residual conceptions that the strikes since 1960 were the beginnings of revolutionary confrontations. The rooting out of this error should prevent the repetition of any similar mistakes in the future.

The educational work of the organisation continued, with the presentation of texts on the formation of the Bolshevik Party and its activities until 1917, and on the relations between Party, Class and State in the Russian Revolution as a continuation of the debate published in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 20. Space prevents further elaboration here, but we hope in due course to share with our readers the content of this discussion.

OPEN MEETINGS

The CWO will be holding a series of open meetings on the theme of

INNER CITIES: FROM RESISTANCE TO REVOLUTION

At the following times and places:

| | | |
|---------|--|--------|
| LONDON | Sat. November 20th | 7.00pm |
| | Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. WC1 | |
| LEEDS | Wed. November 20th | 8.00pm |
| | Trodes Club, Seville Mt. Leeds 7. | |
| GLASGOW | Wed. November 15th | 7.30pm |
| | Woodside Hall, St. George's St. G3 7AA | |

All welcome.

PUBLICATIONS

The CWO publishes an annual theoretical review *Revolutionary Perspectives*. The current issue contains articles on the Italian Left, Trotskyism, and the lessons of the Miners Strike. (For p. 8 & 9)
The CWO also produces a quarterly International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, *Communist Review*, central organ of the CWO. The next issue will be mainly concerned with the tasks of communists in the peripheral countries. It will appear in December.

CLASS STRUGGLE V. THE 'ECONOMIC MIRACLE'

INTRODUCTION

In the last issue of *Workers Voice* the article "Eire: A State of Dependence" explained the impasse of the Irish economy in its historical context. It exposed the myth of 'national independence' and pointed out that Ireland's increased linkage into the crisis-ridden world economy inevitably leads any government to impose greater exploitation and austerity on the working class. But the workers' response to these attacks also has a history, and this is charted in the text below, along with the lessons for the proletariat in general, and its' revolutionary minorities in particular.

Until recent decades the relatively undeveloped state of the class in Ireland has led to it being viewed as the 'poor relation' in terms of class struggle, in comparison with its more mature counterparts in Britain, and even in Ulster. The history books are dominated by nationalism and only occasionally do isolated elements find a voice and fight on their own class terrain.

However, the era since the early sixties, which has seen industry and the working class develop to an unprecedented degree, has also witnessed conflict which today makes the proletariat in Ireland one of the most strike-prone in western Europe. Needless to say however the period also exhibits a whole series of illustrations within the class which cripple any chance of an effective fight against capitalist attacks.

UPHEAVAL IN THE SIXTIES

This decade of rapid industrialisation and restructuring of the Irish economy saw the class come of age in a series of big disputes, with more and more workers coming directly involved (annual figures show that on average three times as many workers were taking strike action in the sixties, as opposed to the fifties).

Significantly, most of the strikes occurred in large scale industries and were often connected with state enterprises (e.g.: the 1962 busmen's strikes, and the struggles in the Electricity Supply Board 1968-69). This contrasted with earlier periods when disputes were not only on a smaller scale, but generally had much more localist concern. The main cause of the sixties conflicts was wages, but engagement and dismissal of fellow workers provoked relatively more strikes in Eire than elsewhere in Europe.

Particularly important was the development at an early stage of a high degree of white collar solidarity, shattering the old images of conformist 'respectability' in a series of professional class actions. Conflict in the banks simmered throughout the decade and culminated in the

longest banking stoppage in history (six months in 1970). Previously conservative teachers also found a class voice as the erosion of their living standards exposed the lie of their 'privileged' position. In fact, in seven of the fifteen years between 1961 and 1975 more days were lost due to disputes in services than in industry.

One aspect of the struggles worth mentioning, because of its lasting significance, was the enormous success of picketing, which characterised many of the major disputes. As one exasperated government report put it,

"The devil has no need to tempt the Irish, he has only to put a picket on the gates of Heaven and none of them will go in."

But unfortunately this basic solidarity was not matched by any tendency towards the generalisation of disputes across sectionalist divisions, and strikes remained within union frameworks, if not always within the control of the leadership. Unlike Britain spontaneous or wildcat conflict was not a feature of the Irish scene.

Even more than their British counterparts, Irish unions are both sectionalist and localist, providing them with ample opportunity to derail the class struggle with any number of 'demonstration' and inter-union disputes. 1970 saw the introduction of the infamous two-tier picketing policy of the ICTU (the Irish TUC) which distinguished between the 'limited' and 'all out' picket (the latter reserved for congress alone to sanction). On several occasions since this has been the smokescreen behind which unions have initiated and/or blessed scabbing.

Their counter-revolutionary nature has been compounded by their close association with state economic planning and corporatist bodies, especially since the sixties.

THE STATE RESPONDS TO MILITANCY

1970 was also a watershed for government policy, as inflation and increasing debt, as well as the abundance of strikes forced it on to the offensive. The ideological crusade against 'irresponsible' workers, but mainly aimed at the state's attack was initiated in the creation of the National Pay Agreement in that year.

The system, which has dominated 'industrial relations' ever since, provides a tri-partite framework for the adjustment of all working class wages more or less annually, and is binding on both unions and bosses. It provides an excellent platform for unions to present each Agreement as a 'negotiating triumph', while at the same time tying them to a convenient no-strike pledge when workers push for action. Ideologically the unions can cast themselves as the guardians of orderliness (etc) in industry against troublemakers, who would return the nation to the chaos of the sixties.

This is not to say that the unions do not make allusions to militancy and resistance to austerity etc. Indeed the formal link with the state has been under stress for sometime, and especially since the effects of the recession and debt have hit the Irish economy, with all three main political parties in the Republic espousing (and carrying out) greater austerity programmes. But no amount of leftist phrasemongering can disguise their role in bringing about a decline in living standards for industrial workers of over 12% by the start of the eighties, compared to a real increase in the sixties. National unemployment stands at 17%, but in certain areas the actual figure is as high as 40%.

THE REAL STRUGGLE

The lull in the class struggle brought about by 're-alignment' of the unions towards social contracts with the state proved to be only temporary, and from the mid-seventies to the present, statistics have soared. The incidence of unofficial action has of course shot up as the Irish working class begins to ignore the unions in order to fight back and defend its living standards. Strikes among tanker drivers, power workers, and RTE staff (the Irish BBC)

are only the most famous of these militant class actions to break out in recent years. Added to these have been massive disputes in the public sector over government pay policy and the burden of PAYE contributions (still unresolved at present).



But it would be over optimistic however, to see even the most bitter of these conflicts as making significant headway in resolving the problems which beset the strikes of the sixties. Firstly, if they are not union initiated actions to begin with then they are quickly controlled by the union at some level and led to defeat. More importantly, but of course inter-related, is that solidarity action and generalisation to other sections of the class in struggle remain rare. In Eire, the central problem crippling an effective fightback worldwide is particularly acute. Strike action remains the business of ~~strikes rather than a part of a class resistance movement~~, and passive solidarity like picket observance is still the highest expression of class unity.

Thus it is clear that the situation in Eire demands of communist a determined and coherent revolutionary strategy. As the whole experience of the last two decades has demonstrated, to fight effectively Irish workers must organise outside union control. This means electing strike committees of revocable delegates, and throwing these committees uniting the different strikes which are taking place, and calling on other workers to join them. As such, the central lesson of the British miners' strike that generalisation and unification are the only way of avoiding union sabotage, is particularly relevant here. And since political independence is essential to preventing workers' struggles being led into dead-ends, this poses concretely the urgent task of creating a communist vanguard in Ireland and winning over the most advanced workers to its' politics.

As a vital part of this, communists must fight for an established presence in the class; revolutionary kernels in the factories to undermine the reactionary influence of the trade unions and their partners in the Irish 'labour' and 'Communist' Parties, and offer the class a cogent communist perspective. As we emphasised in *Workers Voice* no.17:

"Only a strategy of building anti-union groups in the workplace can keep alive the insights learned in one struggle for the next, as a stage in building a communist party with a real life in the working class."
[CWO introduction to the text 'Communist Intervention in Italy']

More generally, the isolation of the Eire workers from their class comrades in Ulster and Britain, and the rest of Europe needs to be overcome. By taking a leading role in organising international solidarity between workers across capitalism's boundaries, and combatting the deviant policies of the 'left', communists can create the basis for a truly militant response to the continuing convulsions of the Irish economy, and further exacerbate the tears in the already delicate fabric of Irish society.

C.W.O.

I would like to find out more about the CWO ☐
I would like to help with the activity of the CWO ☐
Name.....
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.....
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Send to: CWO, PO Box 145,
Head Post Office, Glasgow

WORKERS VOICE

**COMMUNIST
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SOLIDARITY NOT LEGALITY.

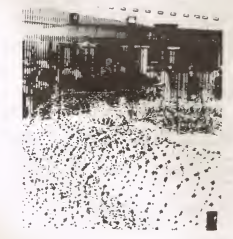
If proof were needed that the bosses offensive is still alive and well then the sacking of 6000 striking printworkers by Murdoch's News International group is sufficient evidence in itself. Since the end of the miners' strike the closure of pits and factories as well as the sacking of workers (most notably the rail guards last summer and the Mirror workers in February) has proceeded apace. Now Cartoonists' strike in Scotland is to close with hardly a fight. Overall the number of days "lost" in strikes is at its lowest level since the end of the Second World War. Nor is this simply a British picture. The miners strike of 1984-5 was the culmination of a number of struggles in the capitalist heartlands which involved French and German steelworkers, Swedish carworkers, Danish public sector workers and Spanish shipyard workers. Now international struggles in the capitalist metropolises. The printworkers' fight, especially since it is taking place in a major multinational with huge interests in Australia and the USA, is therefore another important test of whether the working class is yet ready to release the initiative in the global struggle between workers and bosses.

Lets start by disposing of some powerful myths. The law that protects Murdoch by allowing him to sack the printworkers with impunity isn't a Tory law. It has never been anything else but legal for bosses to sack workers on strike without any form of compensation or redress. What the Mountain of Tory laws have done is to make it illegal to take solidarity action. How have they been able to get away with it? Following the Labour Party's failure to get laws to limit classaction to work, the Heath Government of 1970 tried to do what the Tories have done today. But Heath's Industrial Relations Act collapsed in the face of massive demonstrations and strikes by workers to free the five dockers imprisoned for contempt of these laws. The present Tory laws have been successful for two connected reasons. Neither the Labour Party nor the TUC has any real interest in opposing them but workers still look to these organisations, despite their long and dishonourable histories, to defend them in ruling class circles. But workers will wait in vain for these organisations to defend them since they act simply as the left factions of the capitalist classes. Indeed the role which the Labour Party plays for capitalism is to get workers to postpone their struggles and wait for reforms. By inveighing against the "Tory laws" and promising that Labour will repeal them they can workers into playing the parliamentary game and into obeying the law which guarantee the power of the bosses. This legalistic stand is echoed by the TUC whose latest star is the SOGAT boss, Brenda Dean. Faced with the ideological barrage in favour of legality on top of the demoralisation created by the enormous material difficulties of threatened redundancies in their own sectors it is not surprising that the one factor which can defeat the Government - is, with a few brave and notable exceptions, absent. That factor is class unity. The Tory laws against "secondary picketing", solidarity action etc. can only work if each struggle remains isolated. It

is the role of the trades unions to ensure that this is precisely what happens.

WAPPING DIVERSIONS

In isolating the miners the NUM leaders were relatively subtle and simply putting the interests of "their trade" before that of the working class. With slogans like "Coal not Dole" and "Save Pit Communities" it was difficult for the working class as a whole to find a common platform for united action. Brenda Dean however has no inhibitions about declaring what the real nature of trades unionism is. Murdoch himself expressed confidence in her in the Times on Jan. 27th. "So long as Brenda Dean is in charge I think things will be fairly peaceful". And after the mass picket of Feb.15th she made it clear that she wanted no "outsiders" to come to assist the printers. But the working class can't be an outsider



Murdoch's barbed wire is not the only obstacle facing the printworkers at Wapping...

in the struggles of other workers. Dean isn't a representative of the "new realism" as Fleet St calls it but the old smell of union sectionalism, the very craft mentality which has done so much to destroy working class unity in the past. By keeping the struggle on the sectional terrain, by keeping it as a mere "trade" dispute the unions are preventing each of these potentially subversive movements from leaving the framework of capitalist control.

A mass fight like these unions probably just what the unions want as they have time to negotiate another defeat for the workers. The alternative is not simply to break the law but to bust them wide open by mass pickets and more importantly, by solidarity action. This is why the CWO called on printworkers to "extend the struggle to Fleet St and the provinces". Brenda Dean's argument that letting News International's rivals carry on printing will bring Murdoch down to his knees commercially is a lie and a diversion. Already the other newspaper publishers are ready to follow Murdoch. The Guardian has issued an ultimatum to its workforce over manning as has the Express whilst Maxwell has sacked Mirror workers who won't acab. A seizure of the Fleet St. presses (especially those no longer used by Murdoch) would not only shut up anti-working class capitalist hacks like Hugo "they had it coming" Young of the Guardian but would also allow workers to print a strike paper. This could not only fight the media lies about the printworkers but could also lift the veil of censorship over other struggles which are taking place up and down the country (like, for example, that of the Silentnight workers of Barnoldswick who have joined the picket line at Wapping). A mass picket of thousands might close Wapping but if it remains a ritual battle on police terms then it will simply be another Orgreave. "Picket Wapping" which is the slogan of all the leftist groups is, on its own, not enough, and risks becoming a diversion away from the real issue of extending the struggle to other workers. As we wrote in our leaflet,

"The miners lost because the NUM made sure that they were isolated. The same will happen to the printworkers unless the working class takes the initiative."

SELF-ORGANISATION

Obviously the unions that are scurrying to obey the law aren't going to give a lead in this. In the nineteenth century workers paid into union funds in order

Inner cities unrest continues

As the crisis deepens the deliberate and concerted suppression of information by the press and the press in its turn become more blatant by the day. After the riots of 1981 when the spokesmen of the Government blamed the press for the fact that they had no many cities the Fleet St hacks have become more faithful guardians of capitalist law and order by ignoring both strikes and riots as much as they can. Where events are reported it is usually after they are over (as in the case of strikes) or in a way which distorts the significance of the incident. It is thus important for the revolutionary press to try to fight this blackout with the limited means that they possess. Whilst this blackout is particularly acute in terms of international class struggle (the present Indian general strike against price rises has merited a single paragraph in the most 'serious' of the British press) it is also true of Britain. We therefore appeal to comrades and sympathisers to send us short items which are of local struggles but which are of general significance for all workers The example which follows was sent to us by a comrade in Bristol.

"During the week-end of 7-8th February fighting broke out between police and black and white unemployed youth in the St Pauls district of Bristol, scene of the 1980 riots. The resentment, frustration and anger felt by the unemployed members of the working class in Britain's inner cities is not confined to hot summer nights. An 'unruly calm' to quote the

local police, exists permanently in St. Pauls and has done for a number of years now. As in other inner city areas (like Toxteth in Liverpool) where the police station was besieged after a youth was murdered on the steps) numerous minor 'disturbances' have been blacked out in recent months. But they could not cover-up the night when two policemen were badly injured, a police car was overturned and set on fire, petrol bombs were thrown from surrounding houses, a press photographer was attacked and a fire engine was pelted with stones.

The fighting started when two whites were being arrested by police following a car chase. The police car having careered onto the pavement, ramed a car being driven by a local man with his child as a passenger, narrowly avoiding seriously injuring them. The police withdrew without their 'prisoners' as a crowd of about 100 gathered. A white youth poured gallons of fuel on the police car turning it into a blazing inferno. A local black youth said "...this trouble started because the police started to get heavy and people will just stand for that any more round here."

With all the eyewitness accounts the local media had a difficult job painting the revolt as a 'race riot'. The Western Daily Press called it 'MOB LAW' in its headline, preferring to lay the blame on a criminal minority' but, as it said in Workers Voice 25, this is because "the ruling class sees all class struggle as criminal".

...al problems but in an open vote or a mass assembly which will be able to direct and control the course of the struggle. These are the fundamentals of proletarian democracy and only with these forms will the workers give themselves the means to unite against the capitalist state and its lackeys in the trades unions.

Already workers in Glasgow docks have refused to unload paper bound for Murdoch's presses whilst printers at the Manchester works of the Daily Express have refused the scale contract for the Mess of the World (despite all legal threats). Equally not all Murdoch's journalists have voted with their hostages to go to Wapping will be on behalf of a new ruling class and an alternative imperialism. As we wrote in our Draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Terminus:

"Proletarian tactics absolutely exclude any sort of alliance, however temporary with any fraction of the bourgeoisie. A proletarian policy does not recognise any of them as progressive or anti-imperialist." [Thesis 9 in Communist Review 2]

The way forward for the Filipino working class is not to follow the immediateist struggle to replace one set of imperialist gangsters with another but to reject all calls for social peace from the ruling class as they try to make the workers pay even more for the capitalists' crisis. By opposing all sacrifices and maintaining the continuing struggle for the immediate proletarian interests of higher wages and better living conditions the workers will be able to develop their own self-organisation, independent of all capitalist factions. But the only permanent guarantee of the growth of that independence is the formation of a Filipino section of an international party of the world's workers, the only instrument which can take on capitalism everywhere. Only then will the Filipino proletariat be in a position to fight a genuine anti-imperialist struggle

What we witnessed in St. Pauls was another spontaneous response by black and white unemployed youth against the increasingly intolerable conditions under which they live. Unfortunately these revolts, in themselves, change nothing. They are elemental expressions of the capacity and will of young working class people to fight back but this anger can be recuperated or dissipated into an amomic response unless it takes on a more explicitly political form. This means first of all a recognition that the struggles of the unemployed must be linked to those in work, particularly those threatened with the sack. Such links are becoming increasingly vital. In the past few weeks alone in the South West redundancy notices have been given out at Westlands in Yeovil and Weston-super-mare, Wells in Gloucester, Norak-Hydro in Avonmouth, and at Robert Maxwell's BPPC printing works at Paulston near Bath, affecting almost 2000 workers in total.

The unemployed may have been discarded by a system which produces only for profit but they have a vital part to play in the struggle for a working class society of the future.

In immediate terms their task is not to fight for the statist demand of "the right to work" but for the communist demand of "a right to a decent life". Such a demand cannot be granted by a capitalist system which creates such a waste of human potential. The unemployed and the employed at present struggle in different ways against the capitalist system but the deepening of the crisis is laying the material basis for their future unity. The organisation which can best unite the most politically conscious workers both employed and unemployed is the political party of the working class. By forging links between all workers who are fighting capitalism rather than its effects this party will be taking the first steps towards the creation of the future communist programme."

Philippines

continued from p.3

either supported the Aquino faction or abated. The class has not asserted its own interests but looks to the new government to alleviate the worst effects of the world capitalist crisis. But a government of bosses will carry on forcing down the pay levels of the workers in the interests of defending "the nation". As the crisis worsens it is likely that workers will then transfer their hopes to the NPA, the super-nationalists under the banner of anti-imperialism. This will lead to useless sacrifices by the workers - useless because they will be on behalf of a new ruling class and an alternative imperialism. As we wrote in our Draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Terminus:

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Philippines / Haiti : imperialism changes the guard

INTRODUCTION

Communists have often faced ridicule when talking of the leaders of every nation as US or Russian "stooges". But not even the capitalist press is attempting to hide that fact after the February fall of both "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Not only did the announcement of their flights come from the US (in the case of Duvalier before he had even flown) but the safe conduct and the millions of dollars which they looted from their years of power the US in effect bribed as well as threatened them into leaving. And this orderly transfer has ensured that there is little threat to US interests in either country.

There is also no real change in either country. The Aquino clique is just another faction of the Filipino ruling class which spawned Marcos whilst the Haitian Army is in charge of a Government made up of ex-Duvalier ministers. Only the hideous Ton-Ton Macoutes have been sacrificed to the anger of the masses.

But why should the US ditch regimes which served its interests loyally for a total of over 50 years? Basically it is because the world economic crisis is raging with greater intensity in the capitalist periphery and the needs of US imperialism demand a changing of the guard from above before it is abolished by a mass movement from below which would lead to nationalist regimes that would confiscate the property of US multinationals. This was the lesson the US learned from supporting both the Shah in Iran and Somoza in Nicaragua until it was too late. Events in the Philippines today therefore foreshadow what will happen in other countries tomorrow.

For the past decade the Philippines has been racked by economic crisis which has led to bitter class struggles, divisions in the ruling class and a burgeoning guerrilla war in the countryside. Since 1983, when Marcos assassinated the leader of the rival bourgeois faction, Benigno Aquino the corruption and brutality which had sustained Marcos in power for over 20 years was clearly no longer enough. Investment plunged by 88% and it was clear that the Philippine upper classes were deserting Marcos. This Marcos could have survived but the failure of the army in the guerrilla war had led not only to a collapse of its morale but the exhaustion of the USA's patience with their faithful client's corrupt army bosses. Despite the fact that he had been feted by Reagan at the White House he was told to clean up the regime or go.

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In October 1985 Marcos was ordered by Washington to hold an early Presidential election. Despite Reagan's kneejerk comments in favour of Marcos, the State Department and the CIA threw its weight behind the only alternative faction of the ruling elite now led by Aquino's widow, Corby. The CIA channelled funds to the Aquino campaign and orchestrated personal attacks on Marcos. The US Congress was suddenly informed that Marcos had embezzled \$300 millions of US aid for property speculations in New York. The US Army revealed that his supposed heroic war record fighting the Japanese was a complete fraud. In reality the Aquino faction is little different from the Marcos one. The main issue between them is that Marcos has gone too far in cheating them of the spoils of exploiting the Philippine masses. Aquino herself is an immensely rich landowner and her Prime Minister Laurel was, until recently, a member of Marcos' own party. The Aquino faction stands for the same interests and policies, in particular in its devotion to the US, as Marcos. Benigno Aquino himself once worked for the CIA.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

During the last decade South East Asia has been sheltered from the full effects of the world economic crisis because of its rich supply of raw materials, cheap labour and plentiful supply of US and Japanese capital. However in the 1980s the "terms of trade" have turned against these countries as the prices of their raw materials have crashed. The Philippines have suffered a gradual decline since 1974 but which has accelerated in the last three years as the prices of its main exports, copper, sugar, copra, and palm oil have collapsed. The same goods which were exported for \$100 in 1974 now bring in \$45 in real terms. The value of gross domestic production has fallen 10% in the last two years and is now equal to what it was in 1972. All this has resulted in a foreign debt of \$18.2 billions, approximately equal to that of Poland, devaluation of the currency and inflation of 25%. Officially unemployment is 15% but in reality it is much higher. Recently the country failed to satisfy IMF conditions for further loans and these have since been delayed and reduced. It is hardly surprising that the ruling class could no longer afford Marcos.

However it is the industrial working class, which is about 25% of the population, which has suffered the most dramatic increases in the cost of living since wages, which are low even by local standards, have been held down. During the period of martial law strikes were illegal and since then outbreaks of open struggle have met with brutal repression. The agricultural proletariat and dispossessed peasantry, who make up over 50% of the population, have suffered even worse. It is estimated that there is an underemployment rate of 40% in the countryside. It is this sector which forms the backbone of the guerrilla army. Overall 60% of the population now live below the poverty line. It is of course vital for US imperialism that this state of misery is maintained.

DEMANDS OF IMPERIALISM

The US multinationals have invested \$2.5 billions in the Philippines, which yield a high rate of profit. As a client of US imperialism the country is obliged to buy US goods and technology. An example of this is the Bataan nuclear power station, designed by Westinghouse, for which interest payments alone now amount to \$350,000 a day. In addition a large part of the country's debt is with US banks. Despite this considerable financial stake in the Philippines economy, the real concern for the US is over its military bases of Clark Field airforce base and Subic naval base, the largest US bases outside the USA. They are manned by 18,000 troops, strategically placed opposite the Russian Cam Ranh base in Vietnam and they guard the sea lanes through which 80% of the West's strategic raw materials pass. Since the US withdrawal from Vietnam these bases have assumed enormous importance for the US.

The commander of the US Seventh Fleet, Rear Admiral Chatham recently commented:

"Withdrawal from the Philippines is tantamount to abandoning the South China Sea to the Soviets."

For the US that would mean the abandonment of a domination which they have held since they seized the Philippines from Spain in 1898. After granting independence to the Philippines in 1946 they maintained their hold over the bases through an agreement which expires in 1991. Marcos was replaced by Aquino precisely because the US believed the corruption of a regime which was so closely identified with the USA would give rise to a nationalist movement along Iranian lines or worse a Sandinista-type movement which would emerge from the present-day guerrilla struggle of the New Peoples Army.

The New Peoples Army (NPA) is the military arm of the Maoist, so-called Communist Party. It represents the ultra-left wing of the Philippine bourgeoisie and looks to state capitalism and the seizure of the assets of the multinationals as the solution to the problems of the Philippines. It's biggest source of weakness is that China, which used to support it materially now looks on Maoist revolutionary parties with some embarrassment since China now seeks an accommodation with US imperialism itself. Neither is the NPA yet backed by Russia. Thus it has to operate at present with captured weapons and by imposing taxes on the so-called 'liberated' areas. Its fighting strength is drawn from the peasantry and its leadership from the urban petty-bourgeoisie. The success which the NPA has achieved so far is an indication of the total incompetence of Marcos' army commanders like General Fabian Ver who was replaced only a few days before Marcos fell by the US nominee General Ramos. It was Ramos' defection which sealed Marcos' fate. With Marcos gone US aid to the Philippines Army is likely to increase and make it increasingly effective, thus forcing the NPA onto the defensive. Its only hope of winning the war is to become a client of Moscow and thus the war will be converted into the more orthodox kind of inter-imperialist conflict which we have seen in Vietnam, Angola and elsewhere in Africa, and in Central America. As events in Nicaragua also graphically illustrate there is no such thing as a successful struggle for national liberation today. The Philippines can only escape from the vice of US imperialism if another social force musts the present Manila ruling class with the aid of Russian imperialism. The Filipino bourgeoisie cannot play an independent role. Any faction which gained power would be forced to carry out the same policies of exploitation which worldwide have created nothing but starvation and war on the periphery of capitalism. The only solution is a long-term one and rests in the hands of the working class both in the Philippines and throughout the world.

TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS

In the February elections the working class

OPEN MEETINGS

ABERDEEN South Africa and the Tasks of Revolutionaries Thursday, April 3rd 7.30 WEA, 163 King Street.

GLASGOW Lessons of the Print Workers Struggle Wednesday March 19th 7.30 Woodside Halls, St George Cross Subway.

MANCHESTER The Present Period and the Tasks of Communists March 15th 3.00 p.m. Star and Garter (behind Piccadilly Station). (Debate with the ICC)

LEEDS The Present Period and the Tasks of Communists Wednesday March 19th 8.00 Leeds Trades Club Savile Mount Leeds 7

For meetings in LONDON, BRISTOL and BELFAST write to the group address or see local advertising.

INTRODUCTION

The following article is a contribution from one of our comrades on the question of "female oppression". It deals only briefly with the male aspects of the issue and is thus necessarily schematic. As the comrade says at the beginning, the article is heavily influenced by Engels *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Despite the dubious nature of Engels' factual basis and the fact that he doesn't discuss the first form of civilisation known to humanity, the so-called "Asiatic mode of production", this article demonstrates clearly the historically conditioned nature of women's position in society. The conclusion that the liberation of women can only come through the liberation of all humanity which means an end to class society is the starting point for all marxist analyses. We would however welcome any correspondence which expands the issues raised here.

As marxists we are against all forms of oppression. Oppression of immigrants, women, religious and national minorities etc is all part of the capitalist game of divide and rule. Nearly a century and a half ago, Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto that "The organisation of the proletarians into a class ... is continually being upset ... by the competition between them". The bosses aim is to cut the coat of the workers' only saleable commodity - their labour power. Thus white male workers jealously attempt to guard their exploitation from women and blacks in an attempt to head off wage cuts and speed ups. This competition between the workers occurs not only across racial or sexual differences but also across trade and sectional barriers. And as each part of the working class scrambles to prevent their class comrades from sharing their crumbs, the capitalist laughing up his sleeve at their competition, chides them for being racist, sexist or narrow-minded whilst he quietly swallows the profits from the bakery. It is because comrades seek to unite the working class in order to overthrow the capitalist system and create a society of equality for all that it is not enough for them to simply express solidarity with the oppressed. For communists it is essential to understand exactly why oppression exists. A marxist analysis is however simply an attempt to understand the world. The task is both to understand and change the world. For this reason we are forced to take a political position on feminism which, in its myriad forms is based on those very attempts by capitalists to divide the working class. Take for example the following statements from two feminists.

"Poverty is a crucial issue for women and black people" Diane Abbot, Labour candidate for Hackney North talking to *7 Days*.

"Over the past few years poverty has been associated specifically with African women." *Spare Rib* December 1985.

The idea that poverty or oppression are visited only on the female half of the population under capitalism is the platform of feminism. Not only does this ignore class differences between women, it is also explicitly reformist and entirely compatible with the existence of the continuing exploitation of the capitalist system. However feminism not only attempts to divide the working class but it cannot, by calling only for equal rights for women even guarantee equality for women in a non-sexist society. This can only come about by the abolition of private property and wage labour, i.e. the establishment of communism.

THE ORIGINS OF PATRIARCHY
A MARXIST ANALYSIS

A marxist analysis locates the origins of female subordination in the development of surplus wealth as a result of the development of the productive forces of society. This analysis sees any oppression of women arising, not from the biological differences existing between the sexes, but from the acquisition of private property. Patriarchal ideology of feminist mythology is an ahistorical abstraction.

Up until the nineteenth century, historical thinking was very much under the Biblical

influence of the five books of Moses. Thus the patriarchal family was assumed to be only historical form of the family. From 1861 the works of Bachofen challenged the assumption that lines of descent had always been reckoned in the male line. He advanced the idea that unrestricted sexual relations had existed amongst early paleolithic societies, and that such relations therefore excluded any certainty of paternity, descent could only be reckoned in the female line and consequently women held positions of high respect and authority. This was followed by further studies including that of Lewis H. Morgan who showed that the patrilineal game of civilised peoples was preceded by matrilineal game in primitive societies. This completely reversed all thinking on the family and influenced Frederick Engels who published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in 1884. Despite the limitations of a book based on research over a century old Engels basic analysis still holds good today. He argued that any oppression of women is clearly not the result of "human nature" but has material roots in the Patriarchal family, which time is not an invariant form of social co-existence but a form of the family which coincided with the rise of class society.

Throughout history certain types of the family unit have existed, in each case corresponding to the given levels of development of the productive forces. The monogamous family existing within civilisation today is no exception to this rule.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Until about 10,000 years ago all human societies were based upon hunting and gathering. The size of the group was limited due to the need and supplies of food, and these groups were forced to move about from place to place frequently. During this period of development of society, i.e. within what nineteenth century anthropology called Savagery there existed two main forms of the family. The first was the Consanguine family, developed, according to the research carried out by Morgan, from unregulated sexual relations to marriage groups which were arranged according to the generations. All grandparents were the husbands and wives of each other, as were their children, children's children etc. So marriage existed within but not between generations and the consanguine family existed as the necessary preparatory stage for the future development of the family.

Also within Savagery was the Punaluan Family. This form of the family excluded sexual relations between brothers and sisters of the same mother, extending this later to include cousins. Inbreeding did not exist within all tribes and it was just these tribes that advanced and developed. The essential feature of the Punaluan family was the mutual common possession of husbands and wives within a strictly defined family circle.

With the introduction of the period classified as Barbarism about 10,000 years ago, peoples in some parts of the world gradually discovered how to produce regular crops. This allowed groupings to grow in size and to remain in one area for a longer period of time. They also started to domesticate animals. Following the period known to

WOMEN AND

anthropologists as "Horticultural Society", or as Engels called it "Lower Barbarism" the plough was introduced and we had arrived at "Higher Barbarism" or Agricultural society proper. This stage of development provided the material basis for the growth of large villages, professions, armies, writing and full-time priests. In short it laid the foundations of civilisation. It was within the barbarism that the Patriarchal family arose extending further the restrictions on sexual relations between blood relatives. In fact group marriage became increasingly impossible.

"...the evolution of the family in primitive times consists in the progressive narrowing of the circle originally embracing the whole tribe, within which a common conjugal tie between the two sexes prevailed. The continuous exclusion, first of nearer then of more remote relatives, and at last even of relatives by marriage, ends by making any kind of group marriage practically impossible."

Engels *The Origin of the Family* p.53

Stages similar to lower and higher Barbarism have been discovered since the extension of capitalism as a world system. Some feminists have, in discovering male dominance in these societies, jumped to the conclusion that male dominance is a part of "human nature". What they have failed to understand is that today's primitive societies have all, in varying degrees been integrated into the capitalist system and have thus been influenced by capitalist forms. A sexual division of labour existing within primitive societies is not to be confused with the domination of men over women. The "Man the Hunter" rests on the false idea that hunting is more important than gathering

tasks and rearing children. The rearing of children, many of whom die in infancy is the most important part of labour on which the whole future of the group rests. In most hunter-gatherer societies the evidence suggests a general equality between the sexes but within a distinct division of labour. A classical illustration of the above points can be seen in the social organisation of the !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert. Meat only constitutes a third of their diet and the male hunters were only successful once in four days whilst women could gather enough food for the group for 3 days within a few hours. In such a situation it is not surprising that they "have economic prestige and political power, a situation denied to many women in the 'civilized' world." (Richard Leakey *The Making of Mankind* p.105) Within Savagery and Lower Barbarism exploitation of one section of the population by another is not possible. The total product of labour of these societies is not sufficient to provide a minority to live by non-productive tasks or by idleness. It is only in Higher Barbarism, where a surplus product exists that we begin to see the systematic exploitation of one section of society by another. This is civilisation.

Civilisation has contributed to society the force with which to underline and intensify the existing division of labour. Civilisation introduced a class, concerned, not with production per se, but only with the exchange of it. It created a situation where in short time we can see a class which, whilst quite separate from production itself, does nevertheless direct the production process and subjugates the producers. The wealth created by the toiling masses who have been directly involved in the production process ends up being directed and utilised by a parasitic class which has contributed nothing at all to the production process. The goods (commodities) produced are bought and sold. Money comes into the process as do money-lenders, interest rentiers etc. Land itself becomes a commodity to be sold and pledged and not far behind come mortgages. The centralisation of wealth and the growing concentration of it in the hands of a small parasitic class paralleled by the growing mass of impoverishment is one of civilisations contributions to history.

CAPITALISM

The advent of trading surpluses saw the need to develop armies for protection of travelling merchants, rulers, etc. This trade involved long arduous journeys which were carried out by men not burdened with children. The armies, used for the express purpose of defending surpluses were also controlled by men. The rise of class society was thus paralleled by the introduction of the patriarchal family and the oppression of women.

With the narrowing down of the extent of sexual relations between men and women, Mother Right, which had been the necessary rule in establishing the parentage of children, was no longer essential. Women were no longer regarded as equal human beings as under Savagery and Barbarism. The essential feature of the monogamous family is paternal power. With patriarchy we see for the first time the incorporation of unfree persons into the family unit. The very word 'family' comes from 'familia' or slaves. And slavery itself was the first form of exploitation known to humanity. Slavery developed fully under civilisation and was the precursor of the eventual "great split", not as the feminists would have it between the sexes, but the division into two classes - an exploiting and an exploited class.

THE STATE AND MODERN CAPITALISM

In Europe the feudal state rose out of the collapse of the Roman Empire. With the consolidation of the power of the feudal lords came the strengthening of the patriarchal family as part of the establishment of aristocratic property rights, including the right of inheritance (e.g. primogeniture, laws of legitimacy, etc.). Women's position in turn became that of a mere chattel.

As feudalism gave way to capitalism the merchants who had built up their economic power within feudal society came to realise the need to take over State power and wield it in their own interests. The patriarchal, monogamous family of classical laissez-faire capitalism mirrored exactly the private property relations which the capitalist state existed to defend. The height of the classical bourgeois state was also the height of the monogamous patriarchal family. In nineteenth century Britain the legal position of married women reached its nadir: no property rights, no rights as a citizen, no rights over their offspring, etc.

Capitalism is now in its period of historical decline. The nineteenth century liberal state has been forced to give way to the modern "interventionist" state which we know today. The legal and social ties of patriarchy have loosened. But still the monogamous family unit remains in its most 'developed' form - the nuclear family. Despite all the attempts of feminists to escape its thrall by individualistic and private solutions and despite the attempts (successful and unsuccessful) to introduce reforms to ameliorate its effects (crèches, improved maternity pay/leave, etc.) the position of women remains essentially the same. While the feminists see the cause of women's oppression in men's eternal drive to dominate the female sex marxists recognise the historical basis for their servitude. The root of female oppression today lies in the bourgeois family which has to be destroyed. But the conditions for its dissolution can only come about with the destruction of the state on which the family depends and at the same time supports.

The State isn't a body imposed on society from outside. It is a result of the irreconcilable antagonism between exploiting and exploited classes. The State, as a power apparently standing above society, appears to mediate between classes using its public forces paid for out of the taxation of all the citizens. But in reality the State is the "state of the most powerful, economically dominant class which by its means becomes also the politically dominant class". And the State, like the family, has taken different forms corresponding in general to the different modes of production. "The ancient state was

above all the state of the slave-owners for holding down the slaves ... and the modern representative state is the instrument for exploiting wage-labour by capital." (Engels) Like male domination the state only exists in class society. Thus, even in their own terms the feminists by seeking to win reforms within the capitalist state are in fact only dealing with the symptoms of male domination not with its root cause which is class society. And in practice we have seen how the capitalist state, when faced with some particular crisis like the First World War or the shortage of labour after the Second World War always will make concessions towards equal civil status for women. In the First World War it was votes for women to keep them producing weapons whilst since the Second World War the influx of women into the labour force to cheapen the cost of labour power has been a significant element in the post war boom. As a result of the increasing economic importance of female labour in the British economy the State finally granted women an Equal Pay Act in 1970 and a series of Sex Discrimination Acts from 1975 on. However the fate of these reforms provide in themselves sufficient evidence to show that despite gestures the capitalist state cannot deliver meaningful reforms today. Sixteen years after the Equal Pay Act women's pay in both manual and non-manual jobs is still only three fifths of men's.

| AVERAGE GROSS EARNINGS | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--|
| Manufacturing | MEN | WOMEN | |
| F/Time manual | £172.6 | £104.5 | |
| F/Time non-manual | £232.0 | £126.6 | |
| F/Time all occupations | £192.6 | £114.7 | |
| All Industries and Services | | | |
| F/Time manual | £163.6 | £101.3 | |
| F/Time non-manual | £225.0 | £133.8 | |
| F/Time all occupations | £192.4 | £126.4 | |

Source: Employment Gazette [December 1985]

Paradoxically the failure of these reforms and women's continued low pay has been useful to capitalism in the recession and made women at least in the first part of the recession more employable. Whilst officially unemployment is 14 1/2 numbers of women in work have increased in absolute terms whilst 11 million men have been expelled from the labour force.

| EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK (Seasonally adjusted figures) | | |
|---|-----------|------------|
| | WOMEN | MEN |
| June 1977 | 9,036,000 | 13,077,000 |
| June 1985 | 9,280,000 | 11,519,000 |

Source: Employment Gazette [November 1985]

In addition to low pay and lower National Insurance and redundancy payouts for bosses women workers form 84% of the 41 million part-time workers who have few real employment rights. And as the crisis deepens a few bureaucratic measures such as the change in the National Insurance regulations of Sept. 1982 which wiped 160,000 married women off the unemployed figures since they were not entitled to benefit has been of enormous propaganda service to capitalism. It is now estimated that some three quarters of a million married women are now unemployed without officially entering into the figures of the unemployed.

In short the capitalist state can manipulate any "reforms" to its economic interest (and indeed, as the examples given here show, only grants reforms when they are of use to its slave is, in any case, hardly a step towards real liberation.

REAL LIBERATION

Today we live, in global terms, in a society of abundance yet two thirds of the world's

population are undernourished or starving. Never before has humanity had the potential capacity to exert some control over nature and yet it is destroying rather than conserving the ecological balance of the planet. All this is a result of capitalist class society which demands for its continual functioning the obscene accumulation of wealth by the ruling class of the capitalist metropolises at one pole with the increasing spread of grinding poverty of peoples whose economies have been devastated by the rapacity of imperialism and monopoly capitalism at the other. Today the only way forward for the whole of humanity is for the exploited class, the proletariat, to throw off the shackles of the capitalist state in an international revolution which will free production from the dead hand of capitalist profit needs and create a free association of producers dedicated to production for social needs.

This transfer of the means of production into common ownership will also mean that the monogamous family will cease to be the economic unit of society. Society will care for all children alike and with the end of any form of economic supremacy of one section of society over another any supremacy of man in marriage will vanish. But this vision can only be achieved by a united working class which is collectively fighting capitalism. Individual philosophies of salvation which feminism and other marginal movements spawn are themselves the fashionable products of present-day capitalism acting as barriers to class unity.

The last resort of the feminist is to argue that communism won't automatically rid society of patriarchal attitudes to which we would agree but the point is that without a communist revolution there will be no basis for any real change in attitudes. Human beings,

"must, in the course of their development begin by themselves producing the material conditions of a new society and no effort of mind or will can free them from this destiny." (F. Marx Rural -ising Criticism and Critical Morality)

In fact it takes a revolution to sweep away the muck of the old society as can be seen in the experience of the bourgeois French Revolution and the proletarian Russian Revolution. In these great events it was not simply the fact that women played key roles (in October 1789 it was the sansculottes women of Paris who prevented a counter-revolution by marching on Versailles whilst the Russian Revolution actually started with an International Women's Day demonstration which would not disperse) but that the collapse of state authority for a brief period opened up a glimpse of a new role for women in a new society before the capitalist state reasserted its authority in every sense of the word in both Paris and Petrograd. Whilst Russian women never went back to the same position as under the monarchy this was only because they had an important role to play in capital accumulation under Stalin. But the fact that this first attempt at proletarian revolution was isolated and defeated does not mean for an instant that the proletariat is defeated for ever. What the last sixty years of counter-revolution shows is that only a communist revolution can create the conditions for the liberation of all humanity. Providing of course the world working class can rid itself of all divisive ideologies...

A.W.Franks

* Human nature. The period Engels termed "Savagery" accounts for about 90% of human existence. Therefore if such a thing as a suprahistorical "human nature" does exist, this is the period in which its roots are to be found.

RCP : FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE.....OF CAPITALISM

Under the relentless offensive of the right wing of the ruling class over the past six years, all those leftist groups who operate essentially within the orbit of the Labour Party, Britain's prime mouthpiece for a state-capitalist program - as we documented in WWS - beginning to show signs of political and in some cases physical fragmentation. In the event of these outfits being unable to fulfill their necessary role as foils in the face of sudden upsurges of class struggle, capitalism requires to fill the breach by spawning organisations whose revolutionary pretensions have a fresh, new, radical aura. One such potentially dangerous group is the self-proclaimed 'Revolutionary Communist Party', a 1970's split from the present SWP.

The growth of the RCP is the function of a combination of factors: the disaffection of those demoralised by what, in their parlance, the "Old Left" had to offer, and the radicalisation of a layer of petty-bourgeois elements by recent intensifications of the crisis, especially those attracted to marginalist politics dressed up with a 'revolutionary' appeal. e.g. gay rights, anti-racism, "women's liberation", and so on. The following analysis of key aspects of the platform of the RCP will show that this group has never been a political expression of the proletarianist and that moreover, their modernist image is, even on their own terms, a specious one, nothing more than a rehash of old recipes, some of which are even more reactionary than those of the "Traditional Left" whom they aspire to displace.

THE RCP TAKES ON THE LABOUR PARTY

In a major statement of their strategic intentions for '88 - "Reaching the Grip of Labourism" The Next Step no32 - the RCP spell out why for them the "Old Left" is now a spent force and why the goal of their political David is nothing short of a face-to-face confrontation with the Goliath of the Labour Party:

"The RCP's strategy is determined by our perspective of developing a party-to-party relationship with the LP. After dismissing the "Chelsea Pensioners" of Labourism - Tony Benn and Eric Heffer often seen stivily old fashions or out of touch. - we read: "The left's lack of confidence in its own policies confirms its irrelevance." casting an inquisitory eye over a scene of political and moral desolation, the RCP discover an inflated confidence in its new found 'relevance' and with characteristic modesty tell us: "British politics today make for a more direct confrontation between the RCP and the remnants of the traditional left." (quotes pp 647).

In common with their confraternity of the "ancient regime" of leftism, however, the RCP share one very important political and hence methodological fallacy: that the LP remains a reformist party of the working class - a rather weary illusion, considering that the LP has served to administer the national capital on no less than seven occasions this century. For us an historic rubicon was crossed by all the parties of European Social Democracy who supported their respective ruling classes on the outbreak of the first generalised imperialist war of 1914. Since that time all the parties of the 2nd International, together with their unions, have been part of a process of integration into capitalist's state apparatuses; so that today it is an automatic starting point for the Communist Left that the LP is a tried and tested organ of capitalism. This determines our tactical attitude to the so called "Labour Movement" and is an element of a class line which desecrates Marxian from leftism of whatever vintage. (seeWWS).

Just how revolutionary is the RCP's perspective is demonstrated by their wholehearted embracing of bourgeois electoralism, when they take the next unequivocal step of saying: "Over the coming months the party must get into full gear for the run up to the next general election. We need

to work out in detail the strategic and tactical implications of taking on the LP on a wide range of issues." In other words for the RCP it's the ruling class that calls the tune; the primary principle of instilling the need for proletarian autonomy is manifestly quite foreign to their outlook. The sheer opportunism involved in these 'tactical implications' is hinted at in the same article (TNS32) - "Pose a tactical point of view it is always better if we are seen to be taking on our opponents from the left.."

THE R.C.P. AND THE UNIONS

The whole spectrum of leftism, RCP included, work on the assumption that trade unions are implicitly working class organisations and that their capacity to defend their members interests is continually thwarted by a cowardly bureaucratised leadership. None bodes from the under-standing that it is the capitalist terrain on which the unions operate i.e. the negotiation of the terms of sale of the commodity labour-power, which renders this form of organisation unsuitable for the defence of workers' interests in the permanent crisis of capitalism's decline. Once the leadership is ousted, they argue, and replaced by a 'revolutionary' one the objective role of unionism will be somehow magically transformed.

While going along with this general line, the RCP seek to build 'independent union organisations' - whose specific nature is never defined - which will make the unions into the organisations they ought to be. In the present period the logic of this position can only mean that the RCP want to make the unions more thoroughly capitalist i.e. more effective means for exploiting class struggle.

The January edition of TNS contains a balance sheet of unionised struggles for '85, where an attempt is made to assess the retreat in class struggle by simplistically reducing a complex problem to "the irrelevance of the strategies of the left". The 'relevance' of the RCP's 'modern strategy' in relation to the most bitter struggle of the post-war period, the miners' strike, was one where the miners heard from the RCP nothing but calls to go back to work so that they could have a ballot on a strike which the miners themselves had launched and held firm for an entire year! In attempting to freeze the movement of the miners into a form of capitalist democracy i.e. to kill it, the RCP were aligning themselves with that whole battery of forces which the ruling class had pitted against the miners - from the TUC to the right wing of the Tory Party. The tactic propagated by revolutionaries in order to break the miners isolation, was for an immediate extension of the strike, particularly to power workers.

The RCP is very concerned about the emergence of "scab-unionism"; "The split in the working class and the emergence of scab-unionism on a wide scale is a serious threat to the labour movement." In the absence of a communist policy or analysis, however, the RCP finds itself drawn back into the fold of the "official labour movement", so recently pilloried for its anti-quarantine aims and methods, in order to make a strident defence of the NUM against the breakaway UMW and against those right wing unions that have been formed among ambulance men, railwaymen and teachers. What the RCP cannot grasp is that all trade unionism in the present historical period is in itself tantamount to a form of scabbing in relation to the whole class and its struggle for emancipation.

A strain of libertarian anarchism, never very far from the surface of the RCP's thinking, re-emerges in the same article when discussing ways of circumventing "workers' cynicism about militancy" - "These sentiments are often strongest among workers who are most alienated from the time-honoured traditions of the official labour movement - women, blacks, youth,

unskilled workers." The opportunist logic of this approach can be translated more honestly: "Since we can't seem to do much with the organised workers, the main body of the class, let's see if we can influence the unorganised i.e. the marginal strata."

MACBATHISM: THE RCP'S NATURAL STOPPING GROUND

"The RCP has always emphasised the importance of moving beyond the narrow trade union focus of the traditional left and taking up the struggle against all forms of repression." - TNS no32 (p7) Seeking shortcuts to Marxism and looking for 'catalytic agents' outside of the revolutionary class has been the stock-in-trade of the "New Left" from Marcuse to Gore, as well as a variety of radicalist neophilae temporarily thrown into prominence by a middle class in a process of decomposition.

Again p7: "Because of the RCP's record of anti-state propaganda and activity - and here they include agitation for 'women's rights' and 'international solidarity' - we are in a strong position to develop these sentiments into a wider anti-capitalist outlook." The following quote from 'Revolutionary Perspectives' no21 illustrates very aptly the RCP's political and tactical myopia on this question: "It is quite wrong to say that all

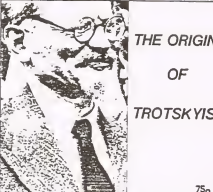
social questions are potentially revolutionary. Capitalism has proved on an empirical level that movements based on secondary aspects of capitalist oppression are not the slightest threat to capitalism. They are its healthy diet. Sexual and racial discrimination are banned by bourgeois statute and the squatting movement has made its peace with bourgeois councils and now actually administers a section of their housing for them...these movements are inter-capitalist and don't challenge the basis of capitalism at all. The limited reformist aims of these movements simply reinforce the body of bourgeois ideology. To challenge single aspects of capitalism on their own is simple reformism. Mostly those involved are led to cynicism and demoralisation."

THE "RIGHT" TO BE "OPRESSED"

A central and recurring theme of the RCP's platform is the defence of 'rights' e.g. "Some trade union officials are prepared to react to anything that might threaten the status for - the right to strike, the right to work, the right to decent wages and conditions." The demand for the right to work has never been a clear expression of the interests of the working class. It is a con-

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REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES



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THE ORIGINS
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ULSTER : ELECTIONS AGAINST THE WORKERS

In late January the working class of Northern Ireland was once again offered the dubious 'privilege' of participation in the capitalist electoral circus. Brought on by the resignations of Unionist M.P.s, the series of by-elections were billed by the Loyalists and the media hacks alike as an unofficial referendum to establish opposition to last November's Anglo-Irish Agreement - a show of strength to Thatcher and her Northern Ireland Office ministers.

It is a basic Communist position to stress the irrelevance to the working class of such ruling class faction fights and indeed the positive dangers of workers even grudgingly participating on capitalist terrain. However, what has been exceptional about this election and its aftermath has been the lack of impact even within the terms of capitalism's politics. The central ploy of the Unionist Parties in the 'Parliamentary phase' of their opposition to the Agreement was a non-event.

The subsequent contortions of the Unionists serve only to confirm the analysis we made in *Workers Voice* no.26 (available from group address) when we stressed their relative weakness against the British Government's determination to implement the Agreement as part of its attempts to cut the financial and military burden of Ulster. Even as the results were showing a decisive majority against the accord, Thatcher's ministers were on television contemptuously dismissing any suggestion that they should scrap or modify a strategy which has the backing of the entire Western Bloc (e.g. Irish Government, the EEC, the USA).

In any case, the mechanics of cross-border co-operation have already been set in place, with the Irish administration supposedly taking on a larger burden of security, and the possible political benefits being demonstrated in the by-elections by the erosion of support for Sinn Féin/IRA to the advantage of the SDLP (pro-Agreement national-

ists). At the same time the British media has more or less 'bought' the accord, and personally it gives Thatcher and her supporters the chance to re-assert "the resolute approach". However, it is clear that there is a crisis of sorts looming in Northern Ireland, as the Unionists shift the emphasis of their campaign to civil disobedience (e.g. the possibility of a rent and rates strike) and confrontation. The next few months will undoubtedly see attempts by the Government to placate "moderate" Unionists with offers of semi-devolution, exploiting their demoralisation and widening the split with the "extremists" such as Paisley and the Loyalist para-militaries. In fact the obvious and well publicised divisions over tactics within the Unionist camp are one of the many factors which make this



The workers must not fight their bosses battles: movement much weaker than that which caused the Labour government to U-turn in 1974.

It goes without saying that these developments in the political superstructure in Ulster have been accompanied by the strengthening of the process by which social questions are seen in terms of 'national identity' or religion. The fact that Protestant and Catholic workers have apparently responded to the language of outright sectarianism is perhaps the most worrying development for communists, of the whole affair.

IRELAND AND THE "NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE"

As a forum for the expression of the bad conscience of British left-wing liberalism in relation to the channel house that is Ireland, *TBS* is hard to beat. The RCP's moral indignation at the repression of Irish Catholic workers - (their policing by the IRA is never mentioned) - is exceeded only by the misconceptions which inform their reactionary position on the Irish Question in particular and the national question in general.

"For the RCP support for the cause of Irish freedom has always been central. We put top priority on support for the Irish liberation struggle because it is the 'single greatest threat' to the stability of the British state." (*TBS* 3rd Jan)

On the contrary, Mass RCP, the so-called 'liberation struggle' is no threat to either the British, or for that matter the British ruling class, because it is part of their 'solution' to this peculiar legacy of the decline of British imperialism. The only danger to these states will come through struggles which transcend sectarian, border and industry divisions, in a generalised unification of the workers of both nations in a struggle for communist not nationalist power. By the use of its regular police and military and through the 'irregular' para-militaries, the IRA/UVF etc the various factions of the bourgeoisie have been able to impose a reign of terror, partly as a consequence of the weakness of the Irish working class, given as it is with ideological divisions. The necessary flipside to the struggles of the latter will probably come from the internal dynamic of those larger, more homogeneous concentrations of the class in Britain and Europe.

Today, in the era of capitalism's totalitarian domination of the globe, a group's position on the national question is one of the acid tests of its true political nature. In all past issues of *WV* we have articles demonstrating that 'national liberation' from imperialism in the modern sense is neither a political nor an economic possibility. As all factions of the world bourgeoisie have ceased

This is nothing new of course, but it is particularly sickening to see the discontent created by rising unemployment and cuts in the social wage (which have hit both 'sides' of the community) being channelled into futile and reactionary nationalisms. Today it is absurd to talk about the 'privileged status' of Protestant workers in Ulster when the unemployment levels and lowest living standards in Western Europe. Similarly it is idiotic for Republicans to claim that Irish unity is a necessary first step in solving Catholic social problems.

Instead, communists point to the irrelevance of both Loyalism and Republicanism in this era of global economic crisis and imperialist domination, and we call for workers' unity in their resistance to the attacks of capitalist austerity. An independent Ulster (an idea which has again re-surfaced) or a united Ireland would be just as subject to U.S. domination as Eire and the U.K. are today, and they would be just as prone to the austerity packages forced on all national regimes by the crisis of capitalism on a world scale. The Communist Workers Organisation supports all the struggles of the working class where its independence from capitalism and capitalist institutions is asserted. Therefore in Ireland not only do we support the 'economic' class struggle but especially welcome fights which shatter the myths of nationalism/religion which have been so prevalent and destructive for generations.

In this light, the hysteria around resistance to the Anglo-Irish Agreement must be seen as purely imaginary, and this goes as much for those Catholics who are rallying around Irish Protestants as for those Protestants who are involved in Loyalist demonstrations, etc. It remains the difficult task of communists to proclaim that the only road to meaningful liberation lies not down these reactionary dead-ends, but in the international class struggle which for too long has stayed in the background of Irish social life.

to be progressive, the tactical grounds for proletarian support of nationalism no longer exist. What Marx said over a century ago is today ten times more true: the working class has no fatherland; its very existence as a global class is the living negation of nationalism. In the light of this, the RCP's 'unconditional adoration' of Sinn Féin is an opportunistic obsequiousness of the most odious sort. According to the RCP, the Hillsborough Agreement was aimed at defeating the 'nationalist community'. In reality the ulterior motive was the political isolation of the Protestant bourgeoisie, whom the British, over a period of time, are preparing to ditch. At an estimated figure per year for its upkeep, Ireland is a huge financial drain on the Ecuophone. This is one of the reasons why it is proving so difficult to 'sell' to the Southern ruling class. However, as we intimated in PF25, the long term objective of British capital remains that of a unified capitalist Ireland under British and EEC informal economic control; in this their perspective coincides with that of Sinn Féin and also facts the RCP.

"By supporting the struggles of oppressed countries against the Western powers that oppress them, workers in the West can hasten the defeat of the system that degrades us all." *TBS* 17th Jan. The RCP put this erroneous Trotskyist theory into practice during the Falklands War when it came out in support of the 'oppressed' galliery regime of Argentina by abandoning Lenin's position on 'revolutionary defeatism' which calls on workers to turn all national wars into civil wars, the RCP once again shows its true stripes.

The RCP, then, is the opposite of what its name suggests: neither 'revolutionary', 'communist' and certainly not a party which represents the historic interests of the class of the future.

RCP

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fused demand because it assumes the working class can have 'rights' under capitalism. Workers as individual petit-bourgeois citizens i.e. as social atoms, formally enjoy rights as 'equals' before the law, but in its collective struggle for political power its exploited class can have no legal expression which is not at the same time a negation of capitalist law. Ruling class law and morality are always expressions of the domination of capital over labour i.e. are an ideological camouflage of actual power relations. The capitalist class has the 'right' to exploit workers and then throw them on the dole; workers on the other hand are driven by dire need to sell their labour power - their so-called 'right to work' is determined by the blind mechanism of the market.

The fact that 'rights' have always been secondary aspects of a Marxist program is nothing new. In 1884 in a letter to Bernstein, Engels wrote: "If one demands the right to work in this society, one demands national workshops, workhouses and colonies! In the throes of capitalism's decadence, the workhouses have been superseded by giant state-run projects - today's 'Youth Training Scheme' are the embryonic form of the slave labour camps of the type of Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany. The real motive behind the 'right to work' slogan is the demand for work camps and the militarisation of labour."

'Oppression' is a favourite item in the RCP's terminology. This concept has a limited status in a Marxist vocabulary i.e. it is an indeterminate abstraction. Unlike the term 'exploitation' which is essentially quantifiable, oppression is nebulous and motive, in a word, ideological. Because all black people in South Africa e.g. are oppressed, for the liberal leftist there is only a difference of degree, not of kind between the black proletariat and the national black bourgeoisie. Marxists, on the other hand, always seek to explain and base their policies on qualitative i.e. class differences.

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS

To paraphrase Disraeli's dictum, there are lies, damned lies and bourgeois statistics. The latest volume of *Social Trends* (no. 16, pub. 1980) contains a wealth of statistics, some of which mislead because they are compiled by people working within a bourgeois conceptual framework, and some which appear to be designed to mislead.

An example of the latter are those figures which enable the authors to conclude that pensioners are now about 50% better off, relative to the population as a whole, than they were in 1951 (by a truly amazing coincidence, this "fact" comes to light at precisely the time when the government is awarding the magnificent sum of 40p a week to single pensioners and cutting the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme!).

But a closer look at this "fact" shows that it is based on the "Total Personal Disposable Income" (TPDI) of pensioners relative to nonpensioners. On average, in 1951 a pensioner's TPDI was 41% of a nonpensioner's; now it is 65%. However, the TPDI suffers from two defects: although it is called a disposable income it does not take account of rent or mortgage repayments or other unavoidable expenditure as it is just income from almost all sources (see below) minus income tax and National Insurance contributions - so it ignores the social trend away from pensioners living with their offspring and the consequent increase in their accommodation costs; and it does not include any income from within the pensioner's family and there is almost certainly a social trend away from such "transfers of capital" as *Social Trends* calls them.

Thus the "fact" that pensioners are better off dissolves into a very shaky conjecture.

Despite the inclusion of the above statistical jiggery-pokery, most of the figures of interest to Marxists in *Social Trends* are perfectly honest but conceptually flawed. In practice this means that the statistics must be re-interpreted and the new results must be treated with caution as the re-interpretation will introduce errors as well as eliminating them.

For example, *Social Trends* claims that "from the end of 1962 wages rose on average improved their take-home spending power". Does this mean that workers in work have become better off, as some have claimed?

At first sight this appears to be the case, as the Tax and Price Index (TPI) was, for example, 2.94% in 1982 and manual workers' earnings increased by about 9% in that year.

However, this (i) assumes that inflation is the same for everybody (ii) ignores increases in the rate of exploitation brought about by productivity deals etc.

The TPI is obtained from the Retail Price Index (RPI) by taking into account income tax and NI contributions.

First let's have a closer look at the RPI. This is based on the cost of the "basket" of commodities purchased by the average household in the year in question. But different classes consume different amounts of different things (as an example, in 1983, the 20% of households with the highest incomes spent 4.71% of their income on fuel, light and power, whereas the next 60% of households spent, on average, 4.83% and so capitalists and workers have different "baskets", and different "RPI"s). Assuming that the upper 20% of households represent the capitalists and the next 60% represent the employed section of the working class (unfortunately, errors are unavoidable here, as the available statistics only come in sufficient detail in terms of the top 20%, the next 20%, etc., of households). A more appropriate figure for capitalists would be the top 10%, and it's clear that the bottom 20% contains many workers in work. Also, working class households with three or more waged members can quite easily outdo themselves in the "wrong" 20%, we find that the 1982-3 "employed workers' RPI" was 5.22 and the "capitalists' RPI" was 4.94, a difference of over 4% in employed workers' and capitalists' price inflation. (This is not just a temporary phenomena: the average figures over the past ten years are 15% and 14.7% respectively).

When we come to the TPI we find that tax cuts for the very rich have an enormous effect on the overall index. Consider 3 households, A, B, and C, where A's income is equal to the average for the middle 60%, B's is equal to the average for the top 20% and C's is twice B's. Assume A, B and C consist of married couple's, and only one partner works in each. Let A's income be entirely earned 60% let 10% and 60% of B and C's income be investment income respectively.

Then we have the following table:

| | 1981-2 | | | 1981-3 | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | A | B | C | A | B | C |
| Income | | | | | | |
| before reductions | 16,400 | 32,800 | 65,600 | 17,400 | 34,800 | 69,600 |
| after 10% | 17,060 | 34,120 | 68,240 | 18,140 | 36,280 | 72,560 |
| after 20% | 17,720 | 35,440 | 70,880 | 18,880 | 37,760 | 75,520 |
| after 30% | 18,380 | 36,760 | 73,520 | 19,620 | 39,240 | 78,480 |
| after 40% | 19,040 | 38,080 | 76,160 | 20,360 | 40,720 | 81,440 |
| after 50% | 19,700 | 39,400 | 78,800 | 21,100 | 42,200 | 84,400 |
| after 60% | 20,360 | 40,720 | 81,440 | 21,840 | 43,680 | 87,360 |
| after 70% | 21,020 | 42,040 | 84,080 | 22,580 | 45,160 | 90,320 |
| after 80% | 21,680 | 43,360 | 86,720 | 23,320 | 46,640 | 93,280 |
| after 90% | 22,340 | 44,680 | 89,360 | 24,060 | 48,120 | 96,240 |
| after 100% | 23,000 | 46,000 | 92,000 | 24,800 | 49,600 | 99,200 |
| TPDI | 23,000 | 46,000 | 92,000 | 24,800 | 49,600 | 99,200 |
| Individual's TPDI | | | | | | |
| | 23,000 | 46,000 | 92,000 | 24,800 | 49,600 | 99,200 |
| If B and C are assumed (correct) to be 10% and 20% of A's income | | | | | | |
| | 23,000 | 4,600 | 9,200 | 24,800 | 4,960 | 9,920 |

The row above the bottom one contains the households' real net incomes in 1982-3 terms (before any wage increases); the bottom row shows the percentage decrease (so a negative figure represents an increase) in those incomes in 1983-4.

The published figure for the TPI is an average of all households, weighted according to their net income. This means, for instance, that a household 'like' C (like A in the final figure).

Although the cumulative effect of the

difference between the inflation rate experienced by workers and capitalists is important, this difference between pairs into insignificance when compared with the 54% difference between the workers' rate and the increase in manual workers' average earnings, which we take as indicative of all workers' earnings. So it appears that workers in employment are better off.

This appearance is shown to be deceptive when we consider the price paid by the working class to the bourgeoisie: in 1983 the average industrial concern (including, of course, nationalised companies) made £10,500 per worker; by 1982 this had risen to £11,809, an increase of 11.3%, well above the alleged improvement in "take-home spending-power". (As the wage-bill of the companies concerned rose from £47,064 to £48,875M and the total surpluses rose from £75,818M to £84,614M, we can make too - because taxes should be subtracted from wages and added to the surpluses - estimates for the rate of surplus value of 169.08% and 173.12% respectively).

What about unemployed workers? Here there is no question of an improvement of living standards. The average weekly expenditure of households in the bottom 20% fell from £19.21 in 1983 to £18.45 in 1984, reflecting a fall in the number of unemployed and an increase in the length of time spent on the dole. The number of workers unemployed for a year or more rose 1.2 million in 1983, and the number unemployed for two or more years rose to 9 million. Despite several attempts to fiddle these figures by re-defining "unemployment", these figures were 14 and 8 million in 1985.

Another statistic reflecting the absolute impoverishment of a section of the working class is the increase in the number of homeless households from 89,000 in 1983 to 94,000 (this does not include the 44,000 households which were accepted as being homeless without being "priority" cases, nor the 51,000 who only thought they were homeless - as if homelessness was simply a matter of being without a home) a year later. No wonder that the suicide rate has increased by 32 from 1979!

In conclusion, we find that the slightly improved living standards of employed workers have been more than paid for by their increased exploitation, so overall they are worse off. But this worsening in their conditions is not so great that they have no choice but to fight collectively. Individual and sectional solutions to the effects of the capitalist crisis are still impossible. But just as the crisis is working its way like gangrene from the periphery to the heartlands of capitalism, its full effects will spread from the unemployed to the employed workers in the heartlands themselves. The bourgeoisie will be forced by the falling rate of profit to attempt to further increase the rate of exploitation without maintaining living standards. In doing this it will inevitably use the employed workers' fear of unemployment to force down wages, that is, it will use the difference between the material conditions of the employed and unemployed to reduce that very difference. The more successful the bourgeoisie is in doing this, the more obvious the common interests of the employed and unemployed will become. Thus the material basis for a communist intervention pointing out that the entire working class has the same interests will become firmer and firmer. This intervention will use the fact that capitalism has no choice but to attempt to overthrow workers' living standards to drive home the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism itself.

C.W.O.

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SOUTH AFRICA CLASS STRUGGLE NOT SANCTIONS

Neither the intensity of the social conflict in South Africa, nor the ferocity of the repression meted out by the apartheid regime show any signs of abatement. Black workers in South Africa are striking and taking to the streets in an unexampled display of heroism against armoured cars, guns and sjamboks under the state of emergency, just as they did before its declaration. In its present form the South African state can only function as a naked military dictatorship, throwing aside all its "democratic" pretences, which anyway never had any meaning for its black majority. The continuation of the present social conflict indefinitely is unthinkable. Either there will be a greatly increased attack on the black population-which anyway could only provide a temporary respite-for the apartheid regime will be overthrown by the black social movement. These however, are options that put the huge military, economic and political interests of western imperialism in South Africa at risk, and every day the urgency of enforcing a solution that protects these interests grows.

WESTERN IMPERIALISM DIVIDED.

Let us be quite clear; none of the various statesmen who pontificate about finding a solution to the crisis have anything but the interests of western imperialism at heart. All "eminent persons", "EEC emissaries" or shuttle diplomat clergymen want to see the establishment of a stable, "democratic" and pro-western South Africa, where the black (and other) workers are exploited under conditions which do not bring about a state of permanent crisis. That much unites them; what is less clear, is how this situation is to be brought about.

One wing of the international bourgeoisie, though it is increasingly isolated, wants to give Botha and his cronies another chance, to maintain "dialogue" and "contact". This group, best represented by Thatcher and the British bourgeois interests, argue that the process of "reform in South Africa will be hastened by not leaning on Pretoria too hard. Similarly they feel that should Botha fail, there is no telling what would replace him; possibly a pro-Soviet ANC and the worst scenario. Thus they argue against sanctions, which they believe could topple Botha and lead to "anarchy", while crying crocodile tears about the suffering sanctions would cause black workers. But undoubtedly the material basis for such a perspective lies in the fact that it is the British bourgeoisie which has the largest economic stake in South Africa, which it fears would be hard hit in any generalised campaign of sanctions.

But the development of events is leaving this section of the bourgeoisie increasingly isolated. It was with great difficulty that Thatcher held the line against EEC sanctions and came up with her "vision impossible" for her poodle home, to the black "front line" states. Similarly at the meeting of the Commonwealth leaders in London, Thatcher was shown to be out on a limb, and had to make concessions to partial economic sanctions.

More and more international imperialism is

realising that the cosmetic reforms passed by Botha are in no way a step towards the abolition of minority rule, but are an attempt to make minority rule more acceptable to the black masses. And it is glaringly obvious that it is not the abolition of petty apartheid which will allow the emerging black bourgeoisie to sell social peace to the masses, but only the installation of a political structure which pretends to represent the black majority, that is bourgeois democracy in the form of one man, one vote.

It is the intransigence of the Afrikaner ruling class that leads increasing circles of western imperialism to argue that only the imposition of generalised economic sanctions on the South African economy, which is already reeling from the effects of the world economic crisis, will force the ~~South African regime to make~~ South African with the black opposition groups such as the ANC, and the eventual emergence of a "multi-racial" and pro-western South Africa. This faction of the bourgeoisie believes that the Tutus, Tambo and Mandelas, who have long proclaimed their loyalty to western interests, will be able to hold the black masses in check, in a way that Botha and his ilk no longer can.

Thus the whole debate about sanctions is one between two wings of western imperialism, about how to bring a change to a situation less threatening to its interests. Communists do not take sides in such a debate, whose framework is alien to class politics. These are around the question of how best the working class can defend their immediate and historical interests against capitalism in all its forms. Perhaps unsurprisingly sundry varieties of leftists, from the Morning Star to Socialist Worker have all joined in the mystifying chorus about sanctions, as if any form of economic warfare between capitalist states could advance the interests of the working class one iota.

INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA.

While the furor over sanctions reigns on the international front, events are not staying still in South Africa itself. Botha seems to have contained for the moment the fury of the right wing meanderthal elements who oppose even the cosmetic changes in the apartheid system, by the imposition of the state of emergency and crackdown on black political groups. At the same time, he has been attempting to break the back of the social movement in the townships, by arming black thugs to terrorise political activists and also making attempts to seek a social basis in the more backward, rural elements like the tribal chiefs who would accept some kind of client status in a white regime. But it is difficult to see these desperate scrambling as being a real attempt at a political solution; only a hedge against possible civil war.

Meanwhile, there is the more muted, but in the end, more powerful pressure of big business in South Africa on the Botha regime, to engage in dialogue with the black opposition. These people have seen, in their dealings with the black unions, and talks with the ANC, that here is the

only social force which can restore peace in the factories, mines and townships. Any prospect of sanctions would increase the pressure from South African capitalists on the regime.

But in the final analysis, what happens in South Africa will not be decided by bishops or businessmen, but by the South African working class. Whether the rulers of South Africa manage to maintain their hold, whether imperialism will manage to bring about a smooth transition to majority rule, or whether apartheid will be swept away by the social movement is a question that will be settled in the heat of class confrontation.

REAL SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS.

The way forward for South African workers is to demand and unify their struggle with the decisive overthrow of the apartheid regime, not to await the manoeuvres of international imperialism's circles of philanthropists, clerics and clowns, and real solidarity with their struggle does not consist in boycotting South African goods, or clamouring for sanctions, as if there were morally good and morally bad commodities, or good and bad forms of exploitation of labour power. We do not stand for democratic or non racial exploitation, but for the abolition of relations of exploitation.

Real solidarity with the workers of South Africa, as with workers everywhere, consists in extending and unifying our own struggles in the capitalist heartlands, especially against those who pose as the "friends" of South Africa's workers. This does not mean that we can "do nothing" now. Communists work in the South African diaspora, black and white, to win a kernel to our cause and help to implant the politics of the working class in South Africa via such a means. Workers can certainly take up workplace collections in solidarity with those suffering clear repression in South Africa, and to support their strikes. Employees of multi-nationalists hit by strikes in South Africa should not be slow to lend active solidarity and sympathy action to their class brothers abroad, since the workers' struggle knows no frontiers. Upon suspicion that military equipment is being sent to aid the repression of the South African proletariat, workers involved in its production and transport should take all steps to prevent its reaching its goal.

But this is CLASS action, and has nothing to do with a campaign of pin pricks designed to goad the Boer on out of its laager. Communists hate every form of exploitation. That of the countries of the Pacific Basin is brutal in the extreme, but we don't propose economic sanctions as the solution to the woes of the Korean or Hong Kong workers, but class struggle.

-DOWN WITH THE APARTHEID STATE! FOR ITS OVERTHROW BY CLASS STRUGGLE!

-AGAINST IMPERIALIST PEACE MOVES IN SOUTH AFRICA! NO TO "DEMOCRATIC" EXPLOITATION!

-AGAINST THE CHAOS OF SANCTIONS! FOR CLASS SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS!

THE END OF THE OIL BOOM

The first six months of 1986 saw the price of crude oil fall from nearly 30 dollars a barrel, to below 10 dollars, touching a low of 5½ dollars at one point. With the failure of the June meeting of OPEC oil ministers to come to any agreement, it became clear that the world crisis of capitalism had at last hit the oil industry with full force. Whatever agreements are patched up in future it is clear that oil is experiencing the fate of other commodity prices in a capitalist crisis/collapse.

The form of the present crisis is the outcome of two conflicting trends. On the one side we had the massive increase in the world's oil production capacity, traceable to the oil crisis of the early 1970's. The huge price increases then imposed by OPEC had the effect of stimulating much new production outside of direct OPEC control, as western imperialism sought to maintain secure supplies of its lifeblood. But much of this new production was only artificially profitable, due to the artificially high price of oil at that time.

The other side of the coin was, that there was no corresponding rise in demand for oil, to match this increased supply potential. Indeed, as the economic crisis began to hit, and as conservation measures began to take effect, the demand for petroleum began to decline relatively, and then absolutely. In June this year, the Institute of Petroleum reported domestic demand for oil down by almost 25% over the year from early 1985.

By acting as the policemen of the world's oil prices, the OPEC countries were slowly cutting their own throats, and were rewarded with an ever decreasing market share. From 50% of world oil, their sales were down to 25% from 1979 to 1986. It was to reverse this falling trend, that the OPEC states, many heavily indebted to Western banks,

flooded the oil markets with cheap oil at the beginning of the present crisis, hoping to drive many marginal non OPEC producers to the wall. But the gamble failed, and the increase in output did not compensate for the downward spiral of prices.

Much has been written in the bourgeois press about the effect of the collapse in oil prices in those countries like Nigeria and Indonesia, which based their dreams of development on oil, and which have since found themselves virtually bankrupt. A closer look at events in the British oil industry will show that the freak situation which has ensured the solvency of British capitalism for the past decade is also ending.

CRISIS IN THE BRITISH OIL INDUSTRY.

Since North Sea oil is one of the costliest to produce in the world, it has been severely hit. Workers in the oil industry, who were relatively insulated from attacks during the boom years, have now become subject to the same cost cutting measures that their class counterparts in other industries have endured for so long.

The industry's immediate response was to call a halt to all new exploration, and to cancel many existing contracts overnight. The oil rig yards were among the first casualties, and prospects for some are very bleak, especially Howard Davis at Loch Kishorn and Heremans Lewis Offshore at Stormovoy. The yard at Ardersier has announced that 500 jobs are to go in August, unless things improve.

In the hinterland of the U.K.'s oil "capital", Aberdeen, the oil industry had masked the effects of the world economic crisis, despite the decline of traditional industries like fishing and paper making. Oil accounted

directly and indirectly for up to half of local employment, and kept unemployment at below half the national average. Precise figures are difficult to estimate, but in May alone 1100 redundancies were notified in Aberdeen, and at least 5000 jobs have been lost since the collapse in oil prices. And there is more to come. A Fraser of Allender survey of oil related companies showed that 10000 expected to shed labour in the coming months.

For those still employed it's the familiar refrain the rest of the class has been hearing for so long. Real wages are under increasing pressure. In June, seamen on the North Sea struck in response to a call for a 25% cut in operating costs. The NUS negotiated "victory" included an open ended wage freeze, longer duty rotas and cuts in sickness and holiday pay. On the oil rigs themselves, unilateral cuts in wages are being imposed.

THE FUTURE.

Doubtless the oil price will recover from its present level, but most analysts expect that it will stay below 20 dollars a barrel, at which point much of North Sea oil capacity will have to be written off. The effect of this will be to greatly reduce the tax revenue of the British state, and the prelude to even more draconian attacks on the living standards of the working class. That the crisis has finally reached the previously immune oil industry only serves to illustrate yet again that no country or sector can escape the effects of the economic crisis, and that that crisis is insoluble within the framework of the capitalist system. No section of workers can be under the illusion that they are exempt from the effects of the crisis, and only a concerted effort by all workers can sweep away for good the rule of capitalism.

WAPPING

As the dispute at Wapping moves into its eighth month, newspaper bosses everywhere are watching its development carefully. They're hoping for a defeat of the Wapping strikers, which will give them reinforced ammunition to attack their own workers. The Guardian, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Mail, the Mail on Sunday and the Financial Times all plan to move to docklands within the next year, and redundancies and cuts in pay are on the agenda. In fact the Financial Times has recently announced it will sack 404 workers before it moves to its new plant in the Isle of Dogs.

Workers in the newspaper industry haven't taken this lying down. Besides Wapping, 176 NGA workers are in dispute with Maxwell at his Purnells plant in Bristol. They were sacked in April after refusing to accept his "survival plan" which would have meant 55 compulsory redundancies and cuts in take home pay. The strikers in Bristol are facing the same problems as those at Wapping in carrying out their dispute. Their biggest problem is that they are alone. The strikers are all NGA members, SOGAT 82, the amalgamated Engineering Union and the EETPU have all negotiated away their members jobs in Bristol and have left it to the discretion of dissatisfied individual members as to whether or not to cross the picket line if any attempt is made to move the machinery from the plant. Members of the NGA are also on strike after being locked out of the Burnley Express for taking solidarity action in support of clerical workers and opposing the introduction of direct input technology. The NGA, however, has made no attempt to link this dispute with that going on at Purnells, even though 500 workers there stand to lose their jobs there.

It goes without saying that these two print strikes have been kept as separate as possible from that in Wapping by the print unions. At the recent NGA conference

Dubbins spent his time concentrating on calling for a Labour government to come to power. He echoed Neil Kinnoch's belief that "only British citizens should be able to own Britain's national newspapers and broadcasting organisations". Brenda Dean backed Dubbins' call for the next Labour government to introduce legislation to make ownership of the press a British concern. This is a sentiment dearly held by the National Front, who have issued stickers at Wapping saying "6,000 sacked by an American-Are You British? We'll keep our newspapers British".

The unions' obsession with Murdoch's country of birth is just a way of avoiding the real issues at Wapping at the moment. Ever since the strikers dismissed Murdoch's "final offer" of £50 millions plus his Gray's Inn Road plant, the strike itself, rather than being stepped up, has reached something of a stalemate. The unions, rather than calling out all their members, have instead tried to channel their demands into a consumer boycott of Murdoch's papers. Despite the fact that the campaign has had little effect on the sales figures, it has become the foremost tactic of the unions, even though it must be paid their £10 a week strike pay, since the union would rather keep the money for the boycott. The unions idea that to buy one of Maxwell's or Shute papers rather than one of Murdoch's to help the strike is of little comfort to the 176 printers locked out by Maxwell at the moment.

Consumer boycotts have never been successful in strikes and are no substitute for class solidarity. The miners were defeated in their strike because they were on their own, and the print workers will share the same fate unless they link up with other workers. As we have said since the start of the strike in our leaflets, the way the Wapping workers will succeed is if they take the initiative and take the struggle into their own

hands. This means extending the struggle to Fleet St and the provinces and getting all the print workers out, as well as solidarity action from all workers involved in the newspaper industry. The other alternative is to let the unions reach an agreement with Murdoch which will include union recognition at Wapping without including full employment for those sacked. This is exactly what Hammond was working on when he met Murdoch in Los Angeles in early July and it's exactly the kind of agreement Den and Dubbins want. It's also the kind of betrayal we must fight against.

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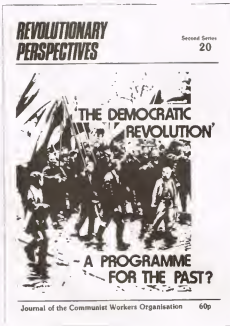
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THE PRISON REVOLT IN PERU

It is now ten years since Mao Tse Tung died and in the course of that time the failure of China to achieve either development equal to her resources or indeed the "socialism" which Mao often proclaimed has led, not only to a rapprochement between the present Chinese rulers and the West but to the virtual disintegration of Maoism as an ideology and consequently to the collapse of Maoist organisations. One of the few exceptions to this is the Communist Party of Peru which is the subject of the article below, translated from *MATTACIA COMMUNIST* 7/8 (July 1986) paper of our sister organisation in Italy, the Internationalist Communist Party. The article, whilst only intended as a report of the recent prison massacres in Lima also underlines the fact that whatever its pretensions, the Communist Party of Peru (Sendero Luminoso) is still trapped within the framework of bourgeois politics. It is not possible to show all the elements of their politics in this brief introduction but the fact that they unequivocally defend "the genuine revolutionary heritage of Stalin" (since this is the basis of Maoism) will indicate what the Peruvian masses can come to expect if the Communist Party of Peru comes to power. It was not simply "bureaucratic methods" which led to Stalin's labour camps but to the need for the USSR to accumulate capital in order to compete with its imperialist rivals. The narrow nationalism of the likes of the CP, thinly disguised as anti-imperialism, treads the same road as Stalin before them (the path to the ideology of "Socialism in one country") and will therefore be no more successful in liberating the Peruvian masses from their appalling conditions than all the other social democratic efforts of this century. Whilst the actions of Sendero Luminoso have exposed the lie of Peruvian "democracy" they cannot offer a genuine alternative for the working class of Peru (especially since they recognise the peasantry rather than the proletariat as the basis of "the revolution"). For internationalist communists however the movements which are at present led by forces like the CPP are at the same time sign of the readiness of more and more of the masses in capitalism's periphery for revolutionary action and of evidence of the need for a real revolutionary lead to be given by the working class. As we wrote in the "Draft Thesis on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Periphery" in our theoretical journal *COMMUNIST REVIEW* 3:



"...the material existence of the masses favours the radicalization of consciousness... Such radical political facilities the circulation of the revolutionary communist programme. Obviously we are not saying that radicalisation is the same as revolutionary communist consciousness. But the fact remains that it is easier to spread the communist programme among the masses, and revolutionary communists receive "more attention" than in advanced capitalist societies. Such "better" conditions imply the possibility of organising masses of proletarians around the revolutionary party..." (p.13)

In Peru such a possibility is as yet for the future but the struggle for an independent proletarian party has to come about through an abandonment of all bourgeois ideologies and this includes the Maoism of the likes of Sendero Luminoso.

The revolt in the Peruvian prisons

On June 19th the nineteenth act of capitalist barbarism took place in Peru. Following a revolt which broke out in the three prisons of El Ponton, Lurigancho and Santa Barbara more than 500 of the inmates were massacred after they had surrendered and were waiting to return to their cells.

A lot of these prisoners belonged to the guerrilla movement "Sendero Luminoso" ("Shining Path") a Maoist group which had succeeded in creating a firm stronghold in the prisons and had begun a process of political indoctrination of the ordinary prisoners aided by the conditions of hunger, poverty and economic marginalisation prevalent in Peru.

After the massacre the country was shaken by a frightening series of dynamite attacks, amongst which was that of a train near Osico in which eight foreign tourists lost their lives. This had followed so many other acts of violence (e.g. five technicians beaten to death) that the Government was forced to proclaim a state of emergency and a curfew in the regions involved.

Sendero Luminoso has been given the opportunity for growth by the dramatic social reality of Peru where many Indians live in conditions which have not gone beyond that of serfdom, and in which a large number of people, divided into small or tiny communities, survive by working some pocket handkerchief-sized piece of land which yields a few ears of maize and some potatoes.

In 1968, under the "progressive" military regime of General Velasco Alvarado, the Peruvian ruling class had tried to create new social structures and start the economic and political "modernisation" of the country. This attempt was a miserable failure.

It was followed by a static period which became objectively more regressive until the victory of the APRA party (Peru's own brand of "socialism") seemed to be the prelude to a new programme for reform. But Peru conforms to the general rule which compels all countries in the capitalist periphery to watch the widening gap which exists between them and the countries in the citadels of capitalism. The underdevelopment of countries like Peru is simply a condition of the development of others.

"Socialism" in power didn't make the country progress by a single step; it has, on the contrary, unleashed the reaction of the extreme right wing which has still got the reins of real power completely in its hands. The young President, Alan Garcia, would like to make Peru one of the Western social democracies (so much so that he would like the "Socialist International" to be based in Lima) and thus he is forced to hold in check the upper echelons of the military; the encounter taking the character of a trial of strength between different factions of the bourgeoisie, divided not only over political questions but also over their institutional "sympathies".

It was Garcia himself, however, who unleashed the ferocious repression against the prisoners. Once the deed was done however, he wept buckets of crocodile tears to demonstrate his anger at the "atrocious massacre" and to show that he is ready to make those responsible pay the "full price". He thus created a distinction between the Army, which had been ordered to suppress the revolt (their operation had already led to a score of deaths amongst the prisoners), and the agents of the ill-fam'd, the crack squad of Republican Guards responsible, it is said, for the mass killings. This distinction was later silently watered down in the retreat of some insignificant escapee.

The General Confederation of Labour (the CGT - Peruvian equivalent of the TUC) has demanded the dismissal of four Ministers (of Defence, the Navy, Home Affairs and Justice), accusing them of choosing to turn the revolt into a massacre. The Izquierda Unida (the United Left opposition alliance) together with the omnipresent Catholic Church and the unions, has called for a ... "protest march". In short they are all trying to find grist for their own mills in order to obtain the widest possible support, electoral or otherwise.

In terms of its poverty and backwardness Peru holds one of the leading places in the geography of Latin America. It has a foreign debt of 13 billion dollars, a population (18 million inhabitants) reduced to casual labour in 46% of cases since 1984 it has suspended all interest payments to American banks, whilst 62% of Peruvians are suffering from malnutrition. Only about 10% of the population can manage to live without real problems. In Lima - 6 million inhabitants - half the people live by begging, prostitution, theft, rubbish picking (the so-called "informal" occupations). In the majority of cases we are talking about peasants who have fled from the countryside. It is the breeding ground for widespread violence. In the Andean zone of Ayacucho, controlled by Shining Path, a guerrilla war rages; there the Army has a free hand to carry out a pitiless repression using Argentinian methods. Tens of thousands of workers have been butchered here for an ideal of liberty and redemption which Shining Path will never be able to secure for them. Shining Path is only the armed equivalent of the bourgeois opposition. The "path" which the Peruvian working class have taken will also be "shining" but for the tasks of the communist revolution they will need to build a motoway.

INTRODUCTION

It is exactly fifty years ago since the event which bourgeois historians universally call "the Spanish Civil War" began. The rising of a group of disaffected Army officers on July 18th 1936 soon won it the overwhelming support of the most reactionary sections of the Spanish ruling classes and the instant aid of Fascist dictators like Mussolini and Hitler. The theory of how the British and French ruling classes in their desire to appease Hitler, cooked up the theory of "non-intervention" to avoid supporting the legally elected Popular Front government of Spain is well known. Equally well-known is the fact that this played an important part in the victory of the nationalists led by General Franco. Less well-known are the facts about the real class struggle in Spain which the war which broke out in July 1936 put an end to. Although the rising of the Generals provoked another revolt, of a spontaneous nature, by the working class the Spanish Republic aided and abetted by the Anarchists, Socialists and Stalinists was able to survive it. This was because these forces which pretended to represent the working class put the cause of bourgeois democracy before that of proletarian revolution. Today's celebrations of the anniversary of the Spanish War are therefore bourgeois celebrations in which salute "the anti-fascist struggle" but which pretend that this was all part of the "revolution". In the foreword to one of the publications celebrating those events Michael Foot, ex-Labour Leader and husband wrote that "the more the whole story is unraveled and recalled the better for the future of democracy everywhere". What he really meant was that the more bourgeois versions of the story are trotted out the safer will the democratic form of capitalist government be. This brief article can only indicate the outlines of the real proletarian history of those events by exploding the myth that the cause for the Republic was a working class fight.

ANTI-FASCISM - THE SLOGAN OF IMPERIALISM

The events in Spain are often treated as if the Iberian Peninsula has no connection with the rest of Europe and that the struggles there were somehow unique to Spain. In one sense this was true since the Spanish ruling class has been so thoroughly imperialist that it had never entered the First World War. Thus despite the intensity of class struggle in Spain in the early part of the century there was nothing to compare with the struggles in those countries which had been devastated by the war. Thus the settling of accounts between bourgeoisie and proletariat in those countries in the early 1920s (e.g. the defeat of the workers in Italy in 1920 or in Germany in the March Action of 1921) had to sequel in Spain.

The defeat of the revolutionary war which followed the First World War was however to have its consequences for the Spanish workers in the 1930s since the Spanish workers not only struggled in isolation from the rest of the European working class but also faced the full onslaught of an imperialist network of diplomacy its final preparations for another generalised war. How did this situation arise?

The First World War, as Bukharin clearly saw, was only the first round in a series of imperialist conflicts which continue to this day. In Eastern Europe the defeated and disoriented bourgeoisies, once they had repelled the revolutionary impulses of the working class and had massacred the most class conscious of them, turned to nationalist, authoritarian right wing regimes which aimed at internal order and at imperialist expansion. Fascism became the bourgeois fashion of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe. With the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany in 1933 came a new round of frenetic diplomatic activities. The effete aristocrats who ran the British and French Foreign Offices tried to turn Hitler's attentions to the East to tame "the bestial appetites of Bolshevism" (Churchill). By now however Stalin's USSR had about as much relationship to the revolutionary bolshevism of 1917 as a naggot to a corpse. It fed only on its proletarian reputation in order to

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE

use it to fool the workers in the rest of Europe into thinking that Russia remained a workers state. The Comintern, once conceived by Lenin as a genuine workers international which would guide the approaching world revolution was by now nothing but a second office of the Foreign Ministry of Russian Imperialism. It was in the Comintern that Stalin was to launch his major diplomatic offensive to win over the Western democracies to an anti-Nazi alliance. At the 7th Comintern Congress in 1935 the policy of the Popular Front was first announced. Now Communist parties throughout Europe were instructed to make electoral and other forms of alliance, not only with other so-called workers parties (like the Social Democrats who had saved imperialism both during and after the First World War) but also with liberals and conservatives of the old sort who were opposed to the new totalitarian government of fascism. Anti-fascism was thus the slogan which would unite Russia to Western imperialism. Although it failed initially to achieve Stalin's objective of an anti-German alliance it was the ideological basis of the alliance with the USA and Britain after 1941. In Spain though anti-fascism was to perform a great service for the Spanish bourgeoisie.

THE SPANISH REPUBLIC AND THE POPULAR FRONT

The Spanish bourgeoisie had been unable to establish a stable form of domination over society even when the conditions for the accumulation of capital were good. In the situation after the 1929 Wall St. Crash, when the class struggle intensified, it found it almost impossible to unite against the working class. This was the fundamental cause of the bourgeois "Civil War". The tragedy for the Spanish workers was that their own civil war against the whole bourgeoisie was abandoned as it became drawn into the struggle on the side of "democracy" against fascism.

The Spanish Republic was set up in 1931 following the collapse of the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera who fled to Paris when Spain's economic problems became manifestly insoluble. The Republic was the product of Republican and Socialist intellectuals who represented the industrial bourgeoisie (the leading Socialist Prieto was in fact a millionaire from industrial holdings in the Basque country) and immediately aroused the anger of the traditional agrarian capitalist class who tried to retain their traditional privileges whilst using the new power of domination that capitalism gave them over the labour force. Whilst the latter organised themselves effectively enough to win power from 1933 to 1935 (the so-called "Black Two Years") the Republicans, Socialists and tiny Communist Party (PCE) eagerly grasped at the Popular Front formula of the Comintern in order to win the elections of February 1936. The accession to power of the Left wing of the Spanish ruling class did not lead to a new period of quietness in the class struggle. Rather the opposite happened since the working class intensified its struggle and demanded that the bourgeois politicians keep some of the promises which they had been so liberal with in the election campaign. Strikes, assassinations and lockouts were daily occurrences in the first half of 1936. It was the failure of the Left to tame the working class that led to the attempted coup by Franco. But Franco's coup unleashed a spontaneous revolt of the workers throughout Spain - above all in Madrid and Barcelona.

THE WORKERS RISING

When news of Franco's coup reached Madrid the Republican leaders of the Government were paralysed. Although they had arms at their disposal they knew the dangers that Spanish capitalism would run if they were handed over to the one force capable of organising against the Generals. The working class would not only be able to fight the fascists but would be in a position to carry out the social revolution. Whilst the Government of Martinez Barrios refused to arm the workers the working class were

already attacking the barracks of Republican Assault Guards and the Civil Guard in Madrid and Barcelona and seized arms for themselves. In this situation the Popular Front Government shuffled the pack once more and replaced Martinez Barrios with the Ciral Government which contained PSOE leaders. This government now sanctioned what was already going on except that the weapons were released into the hands of the trades unions. By April 20th the bourgeoisie was already finding the organisational means to recuperate the spontaneous revolt of two days earlier. It was the beginning of a process which converted the class anger of the workers into the mere adjunct of an inter-imperialist war. Instrumental in this process, and indeed essential to it was the role of the two supposedly proletarian organisations, the anarchist CNT and the PSOE and its union organisation, the UGT.

THE DERAIL OF SPANISH ANARCHISM

Anarchism is currently undergoing something of revival in Western Europe though it seems unlikely that the majority of those who now nominally espouse the doctrine know much about either its history or its theory. In Spain the bankruptcy of anarchist theory was to have tragic consequences for the proletariat. In 1936 the Anarchists of the CNT-FAI represented the vast majority of the class conscious proletarians of Barcelona and they openly declared the struggle against Franco to be the beginning of a social revolution. Unfortunately these fine words were not matched by CNT deeds which revealed the inadequacy of anarchism as a revolutionary theory of the proletariat.

The first Anarchist capitulation came in Catalonia where the bourgeois President of the Catalan Government told the CNT leaders that "Today you are the masters of the city", a thought so terrifying for them that they promptly accepted his plea that "You can count on me and my loyalty as a man who is convinced that the whole past of shame is dead and desires passionately that Catalonia should henceforth stand among the most progressive countries in the world." (From the book by the CNT leader Garcia Oliver, DE JULIO A JULIO). So instead of destroying bourgeois power the Anarchists left it intact and soon fell in with the Popular Front mentality which they had obtained from earlier. Instead of proclaiming the end of the Popular Front and its replacement with proletarian power they actually set up an Anti-Fascist Militias Committee which co-ordinated the actions of the Anarchists with those of the Socialists and the Communists and thus consolidated the bourgeois power of the Popular Front government. In November 1936 they went one better and joined the Madrid Government, now headed by Largo Caballero of the PSOE, when Juan Peirce, Federico Montseny and Garcia Oliver joined the Popular Front the CNT daily, SOLIDARIDAD OBRERA, called it "the most transcendental day in the history of our country." The same paper went on to maintain that this was a step forward for the proletarian revolution.

"The government in this hour, as a regulating instrument of the organisms of the State no longer represented a system which divides society into classes. And both will tend even less to oppress the people as a result of the intervention of CNT (in the government)."
OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION by the anarchist Vernon Richards.) After denying for decades that the Marxists were wrong to maintain the need for a proletarian power as oppressive the Anarchists now leaped into the bourgeois claiming that this prostitution would convert the bourgeois state to the workers friend. Furthermore the CNT adopted the same slogans as the other Popular Front parties that the war and the revolution were inseparable. This was precisely what the Stalinists were saying since concern for the anti-fascist fight was the best means to undermine the independent struggles of the

R IE MYTH OF ANARCHISM

Spanish proletariat.

However whilst many anarchists would concede these failures they take refuge in the fact that "the real revolution" was taking place in the countryside, in the agrarian collectives. This not only reveals the cardinal weakness of anarchism in that it fails to see that without control of the political process no economic revolution can be meaningfully enacted but also shows that these anarchists are blind to the facts. The agrarian collectives, whatever the subjective will of their members, did not do away with the essentially exploitative relations of a class society. Each collective worked for itself in competition with other collectives and thus we had a kind of Froudonist world which divided the collectives into rich and poor, depending on the nature of the land around them. Even anarchists like Richards were forced to admit that:

"In some factories all the workers drew a fixed weekly wage, but in others the profits or income were shared out amongst the workers, an arrangement which was not compatible with the spirit of the revolution."

the Asturias rising of 1934. In fact the PSOE leader actually made a major contribution to the defeat of the workers here by warning the bourgeoisie if what was happening as well as calling off the insurrection in the rest of Spain. However since the courts gave Largo Caballero a 30 year prison sentence (which no-one expected him to serve) he emerged as a martyr in the bourgeois press and now took to calling himself "the Spanish Lenin" (in order to live up to this gross comparison this lifelong reformist took to reading Lenin's works whilst he spent a few months in prison). (See WORKERS VOICE 19 for a more detailed account of the Asturias rising). As we shall see Largo Caballero's false reputation as a genuine socialist was to be very unattractive to the counter-revolution in the early months of the Spanish War.

This was particularly true of the first week of the workers insurrection after the Franco coup. The issue was posed clearly at the time by the International Communist Left in their journal BILAN: "The facts speak clearly in this respect. It was precisely after 19th July that the proletariat by joining its armed struggle with the general strike succeeded in advancing the furthest on the



The bodies of workers and their enemies outside the Moncada barracks in Madrid, July 1936.

By fostering illusions about a political and economic revolution the Anarchists became part of the process of the counter-revolution itself and thus played their part in preparing the way for the final act of the Stalinist counter-revolution - the May Days of 1937 in Barcelona.

THE SOCIALISTS AND THE STALINISTS

The CNT were however only the sorcerer's apprentices at counter-revolution compared with the vastly more politically experienced Socialist Party (PSOE) who in their turn were destroyed by the Stalinists of the PCE.

The PSOE was a typical reformist party of the Second International but unlike its counter-parts elsewhere it was able to maintain the myth that it was still a workers party because the Spanish bourgeoisie had not entered the imperialist war in 1914. This meant that the PSOE was not involved in mobilising workers for the war as in other and as we have already seen converted the spontaneous militia committees into the Anti-Fascist Militia Committee which was mere appendage of the Popular Front.

revolutionary road, acquiring the highest political consciousness compatible with its ideological immaturity, carrying the SOCIAL struggle to its highest point... The general strike immediately took on a political and insurrectionary character while the workers were putting forward their demands: the 36 hour week, wage increases, the tentative moves towards the appropriation of the factories, without however, in the absence of the class party - grasping the necessity for the destruction of the bourgeois state. But this understanding could have been reached subsequently, in the course of the process of formation of a party, if the workers had kept the struggle on the terrain of their own class interests, their material conditions, the only basis which would allow them to oppose the WHOLE capitalist class." But the socialist UGT and the anarchist CNT both brought the general strike to an end in the interests of the war against Franco. They returned factories to bourgeois supporters of the Popular Front so that only nationalist-owned factories were expropriated and as we have already seen converted the spontaneous militia committees into the Anti-Fascist Militia Committee which was mere appendage of the Popular Front.

In November 1936 the collaboration of the CNT and the PSOE-UGT reached its apogee in the formation of the Largo Caballero Government

which was created specifically to increase the loyalty of the workers to the Popular Front. In short it completed the process of turning the class war into an imperialist war. This was further underlined by the entry of the Stalinists into the Government for the first time. Although there were only two PCE ministers they retained an influence far beyond their numbers since the Popular Front was entirely dependent on the USSR for its arms and other supplies. This influence was used to further the policies of Stalin in gaining an alliance with the Western powers and this meant that the social revolution in Spain had to be crushed.

THE RISE OF THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY

The leaders of the Spanish Communist Party were a singularly colourless bunch and the party had always been a pliant tool of Moscow. At the beginning of the Spanish War its numbers had been minuscule but the needs of the Spanish bourgeoisie soon changed that. The outbreak of the war caught Stalin by surprise and it was thus some months before he was able to send arms to aid the Republic. With the arms came his agents like Gero, Togliatti and Codovilla. They were soon to be the real rulers on the Republican side. Their first orders to the PCE was that it defend the rights of property owners everywhere in the Republican zone since the weak and divided liberal Republican parties had failed to do this. Whilst the initial ideas behind the policy was to prove to the ruling classes in Britain and France that the Republic wasn't very "Red" at all and thus worthy of the support of the "democracies" it actually led to a rise in PCE membership.

Whilst this policy won over individual Tories like the Duchess of Atholl the French and British were far more interested in a German than a Russian alliance so for the time being the policy failed. However within Spain it led to a dramatic rise in the numbers of the PCE which became a mass party on the basis of the support it enjoyed amongst the petty bourgeois producers of areas like Murcia and Valencia. And with the PCE in the Government to take advantage of the splits amongst the socialists it was PCE policies which dominated (such as the replacement of the militia by a regular bourgeois army and the shipment of the Spanish gold reserves to Russia to ostensibly buy arms). By May 1937 the PCE was ready to crush the last vestiges of proletarian independence which continued to manifest itself in workers control of public utilities and factories in Catalonia. The famous "May Days" of 1937 began when the Stalinists attempted to seize the Barcelona Telephone exchange and workers throughout the city took to arms and threw up barricades all over the city. The event was the final capitulation of the CNT before a reality they could not understand. After a few days fighting they negotiated a ceasefire, the outcome of which was to deliver the city into the hands of the Stalinists. Whilst a few individual militants were prepared to ignore the ceasefire the Barcelona working class followed the CNT leaders for the last time and thus they were delivered up to the PCE which was able to take over the city with 5000 Assault Guards and the blessing of the new Socialist Government of Negrin. Having won the social revolt in the interests of the bourgeoisie Largo Caballero and the Anarchist Ministers were now expendable. In the next two years Barcelona and Madrid were to be subject to two terrors - first that of the SM (Spanish equivalent of the NKVD) and then that of Franco.

LESSONS OF THE SPANISH WAR

We have tried to demonstrate here that, despite the heroism and the class consciousness of the Spanish workers the events in Spain could not have reached a successful conclusion for the working class for two fundamental reasons. The first was the fact that the struggle for socialism has to be made on an international front which paralyses the capacity of imperialism to use the turmoil to its own advantages. In Spain the converse occurred - a potential proletarian revolution was from its earliest days converted into both a training ground for new techniques of warfare (which "Quintana" so graphically illustrates) and a pawn in the game of international diplomacy leading towards the second generalised imperialist war of the century. The defeat of the workers in

SPANISH CIVIL WAR

continued from p5

Germany, Russia Britain and Italy in the 1920s meant that the only possible support the Spanish workers might have counted on would have been from the French working class. Surely it is no accident therefore that the only other working class which was fully under the influence of the ideology of Popular Frontism was that in France where the workers were not physically defeated but were dominated by the same bourgeois ideology in the guise of socialism as in Spain.

The domination of bourgeois ideology over the proletariat in Spain also accounts for the failure of the Spanish workers to break either from PSOE reformism or petty bourgeois localism of the CNT to form the class party of the proletariat. Even those elements which attempted to break with the domination of the counter-revolutionary Third International like the POUM, the Friends of Durruti or the Trotskyists all fell into the same trap - the trap of anti-fascism. Instead of supporting the autonomous struggles of the proletariat in July 1936 they tried to limit these struggles within the limits of the bourgeois aims of the Popular Front. Instead of a war against ALL the bourgeoisie they wanted a war against the Nationalists first and hoped to save the real class war for the future. Thus they all supported the Popular Front governments, all wanted to limit the general strike of 1936 to factories which made no contribution to the war effort and they all called for 'defence of the revolution' rather than make the real revolution against the bourgeois state in its democratic form (See the evidence of the ex-Trotskyist participant Grandizo Munis in his book 'Alamos de horror'). One thing that the Spanish war proves above all others is that the proletariat in this century can no longer follow the politics of the lesser evil i.e. support for the left of the bourgeoisie against the right. The only path to the emancipation of the working class lies in the struggle on its own terrain and for its own interests.

And to fight for its own interests it is essential that the working class creates the basic form of political organisation which leads the ideological fight against all bourgeois ideologies and acts as a practical guide in the vital moments when proletarian action on a wide scale is possible. The International Communist Left were correct in the course of the Spanish war to point to the absence of such an organisation - a fact which was indicative of the depth of the counter-revolution over the working class everywhere following the defeat of the post-war revolutionary wave in the 1920s. It also shows that political consciousness of

the working class cannot be a mere passive product of the economic conditions of the time. In the 1930s the Spanish proletariat faced enormous economic hardships (e.g. unemployment amongst Barcelona building workers in 1936 was 70%) and this produced a militant and heroic capacity for united action on a class basis but it was not sufficient for the Spanish working class to see through the pretensions of the PSOE, CNT and PCE which they considered to be their real representatives. Proletarian political consciousness therefore has to be fought for, whatever the economic conditions that are confronting the working class. This remains the major task of communists today. It is the prime activity of the International Bureau of the Revolutionary Party to which the CWO is affiliated. The future Party of the proletariat must be international and it must be the expression of the independent struggles of the working class capable of understanding the vital lessons of the struggles of the past and applying those lessons to today's working class practice.

SPAIN FIFTY YEARS AFTER

Today in Spain as in 1936 we find the 'specialists' of the PSOE in power, with Felipe Gonzalez doing precisely the same job (albeit with different rhetoric) for the bourgeoisie as Largo Caballero did fifty years ago. However signs remain that the workers are no longer taken in by talk of not striking against a 'socialist' government. In the car factories of Valencia and especially in the shipyards of Giron the Spanish working class have spearheaded the resistance to the austerity measures which the crisis of profitability of Spanish capital has forced the bourgeoisie in Spain to resort to. The only force capable of carrying this out (precisely because of its supposed record in the Spanish War) is the PSOE. By keeping the left in power (as in the recent elections) the Spanish bourgeoisie hopes to carry its austerity plans still further and has recognised that the PSOE has been relatively successful. For their part the workers of Giron have shown that they are as capable as laying down their lives to defend their conditions of existence as their proletarian ancestors. Already they have responded to police tear gas by arming themselves. However the chief weapon of the working class is its capacity for self-organisation. Once the workers everywhere are struggling simultaneously and in solidarity with each other organised under the leadership of their own party they will be irresistible.

Then the nostalgia of the Spanish War will be recognised for the nightmare it was and its memory can be expunged altogether by the deeds of the proletariat of the present.

০ 'কাল পলায়' কেবল কোথা, যাকে কোথা ?

০ কলিকাতা-১৫-নং মন্ডলীর সড়কীকরণের পক্ষে পুঁজি হুঁ হুঁ।

০ বিহার-১৫ নং মন্ডলীর সড়কীকরণের পক্ষে পুঁজি হুঁ হুঁ।

০ 'বিহারী'রা সড়কীকরণের পক্ষে পুঁজি হুঁ হুঁ।

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FOR BENGALI READERS LAL PATAKA, THE Bengali language publication of the supporters of the International Bureau in India is now available. Write to: Lal Pataka, Dumasia Road, Bikanpur 722122, Bankura, West Bengal, INDIA for rates.

IRELAND

Continued from p8

Contract" in Britain, and the Irish equivalent, the series of National Pay Rounds, both prove that the unions are prepared to sell the decaying system of which they are an integral part.

Essentially, it is this negotiating role which dictates the anti-working class nature of the unions today, whether their leaders are 'left' or 'right', 'militant' or 'moderate'. Such subjective factors can only influence whether or not a particular union is explicit in its co-operation with the state, or whether it is generally 'bureaucratic' or 'democratic'. The politics of the leadership cannot make any union a working class organisation when the only lasting gain left to be made is in the socialist revolution.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

The problems of union sabotage faced recently by Irish workers are the problems of the class internationally, as capitalism relentlessly steps up its attacks. The CWO's only special call on the workers of Ireland is to utterly reject the sectarian filth of both shades of nationalism, which attempts to persuade us that gains are to be had by affiliating to one or other capitalist nation-state. Otherwise, we repeat our call to workers everywhere:

- Agitate for all struggles to be put under the control of an elected strike committee responsible to and recallable by a mass assembly of all workers involved.
- Do not be content with union style token picketing. Extend solidarity action beyond factory gates and industry boundaries to include all workers (including the unemployed).
- Fight against the unions for an effective struggle against the bosses. Ignore union ballots and delaying tactics.

- Expose the union manoeuvres to sabotage the struggle to the whole of the workforce. Help build a network of internationalist factory groups fighting for a communist perspective within the workplace.

Far from being 'unrealistic' or 'utopian' acts, these are the first steps in a real workers fightback against capitalisms' attacks.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed explanation of the CWO's position on trade unions see the text "Marxism and the Trade Union Question" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* n°20.
2. For more information on Factory Groups and Unemployed Workers Groups see our Platforms available from the CWO's addresses.

CWO PUBLIC MEETING.

"The Communist Position on the Nature of the Soviet Union."

Saturday 6th September at 7.30 p.m.

The Crown, The Old Market, BRISTOL.

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

19

THEORIES OF

STATE CAPITALISM

60p

Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

RUSSIA RE-MYSTIFIED

THE RCP'S NEW APOLOGY FOR STATE CAPITALISM

THE SOVIET UNION DEMYSTIFIED by Frank Furedi
a Junius Publication.

This book is the latest offering from the so called "Revolutionary Communist Party", a Trotskyist organisation that till now has been rather reticent on certain fundamental issues, such as the nature of the Soviet social system. With this work, their weightless attempt yet to establish their theoretical credentials, they have tried to fill the gap. However, the book's analysis situates the RCP more firmly than ever in the Trotskyist tradition of vulgarisers of Marxism, for whom the Soviet Union is a transitional mode of production, a new social formation which is neither a workers' democracy nor capitalism. Such a political halfway house is incompatible with Marxism and provides a rationale for opportunism and political

There are essentially three main planks to the RCP's arguments. The first is that the law of value no longer operates in the USSR, the second is that the bureaucracy does not constitute a ruling class, and the third is that the Soviet Union is not an imperialist power. In effect these positions cannot lead to the more effective critique of Stalinism that the RCP claim, but to an apology for, and political accommodation with it.

THE LAW OF VALUE.

Discussing the industrialization of the 1930's
Furedi says.

"The death of the capitalist market also meant the passing of the law of value as the regulator of society's labour time..Instead of the market, a chain of command now determined the allocation of resources"(p. 89)

To pursue this logic implies that communist relations of production could be implemented in the Soviet Union, if the bureaucracy so wished. But the capitalist market can and indeed largely has during world war disappear without abolishing capitalism.

"The whole of the market relationship, except the market relations between capital and labour may disappear without affecting the capitalist form of production at all. The market relation between capital and labour is the only developed capitalist relation per se. Short of its abolition, the historically developed form of production called capitalism cannot disappear." (P. Mattick Partisan Review 1961).

The failure of the revolution in Russia to extend itself internationally, meant that communist relations of production could not be built, and that the forces of production could only be developed on a capitalist basis, albeit in the form of state capitalism. State directed accumulation, through forced rapid industrialisation, was possible in Russia for two reasons. Firstly because of

The low organic composition of the national capital in the USSR has been one of the main reasons for the fact that the Soviet Union has not been able to bear the brunt of the costs of accumulation, by being transformed into a country of agricultural specialization. This development of the productive forces of Russia has been the result of the fact that Russia the world's second industrial power has been transformed into a country which has been added to a very high organic composition of capital. For Marxists, this means that the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, as in the case of the capitalist countries, in the USSR cannot be demonstrated empirically. On the other hand, the fact that the USSR has not been able to disengage nature of commodity production, and that the rate of accumulation is not high in absolute terms, but nothing else can explain decline in Soviet growth rates, except falling rates of rate of accumulation. The rate of accumulation of the law of value in the Russian economy. The effects of this law may have been particularly noticeable in the period of the 1930's, but the need to replace obsolete constant capital, by importing foreign technological equipment, and the planned re-emergence of the Soviet Union into the world economy, in other words, Russia's economic growth is not planned.

bureaucracy in the Kremlin, but by world capitalism.

According to Furedi,
"Soviet workers do not sell their labour-power, labour power is not a commodity, and there is no market in labour. Nor do Soviet workers earn wages in the same way as workers in the west; the relationship between wages and living standards that prevails under capitalism has been substantially modified in the Soviet Union."

The analysis of the nature of Russia however cannot begin from the sphere of circulation, but must be sought in the process of production and accumulation. For us the capitalist nature of Russia is defined by the commodity character of the products, by the separation of the producers from the means of production and the accumulation of capital based on the extraction of surplus value from labour power. In Russia the producers are wage-labourers, exchanging their only commodity against a wage, which they in turn exchange for other commodities which ensure their existence. This relationship is the backbone of the capitalist nature of the whole economy.

"Thus capital pre-supposes wage-labour: wage labour pre-supposes capital. They reciprocally condition each other, they reciprocally bring each other forth." Marx, in Wage Labour and Capital.)

Despite wage fixing, and attempts to prevent or enforce the movement of labour (both of which existed in Nazi Germany without making it non-capitalist), wage labour has never been other than a commodity in Russia, hence the surplus for accumulation has taken the form of surplus value, and this expansion the form of capitalist accumulation.

THE QUESTION OF CLASS.

Having added nothing to the worn eaten corpse of Trotskyism on the law of value, the RCP has not only failed to pose the question of the class nature of the bureaucracy but also with the classic position of their current they reject the view that the bureaucracy is, or is becoming, a parasitic class. The RCP with its "grip on the surplus fund", is its lack of overt ownership. They also reject the view that the bureaucracy is a waste, and claim that it is best described as a "bureaucratic order", which is merely an impressionistic evasion of analysis. The formalistic separation of the RCP from the bourgeoisie is one which this implies, ignores the fact that there has never been a phase of capitalism without the exploitation of the working class and that the RCP has never posed a political orientation. Weak national capitals, like Russia, require a ruthless political control in order to survive on the world market.

The RCP follow Trotsky in arguing that the bureaucracy is not a class since it is not hereditary, and since it does not legally own the means of production. But this is beside the point. A ruling class is defined by its function as the collective disposer of the surplus created by the labour of the ruling class. Thus bishops, abbots etc. in the Middle Ages, and the feudal propertariat in the modern world, and the bureaucracy in Oriental Despotism. A class is only defined in terms of its recruitment or legal position in bourgeois sociology. For Marxists, what constitutes a class is its position in the process of production and reproduction. In this sense the state bureaucracy in Russia constitutes a ruling class.

IS THE SOVIET UNION IMPERIALIST?

The RCP feel that the relations between Russia and the west are of a different kind from those traditional between imperialist powers. Let us allow them to speak for themselves,

"It is clear that the conflict in

East-West relations is of a different order from the rivalries that wax and wane in relations among imperialist powers. Despite the many points of East-West conflict, the Soviet Union is committed to preserving the existing divisions of the world."

Again this is a fallacy, that ignores the Imperialist imperative for Russia, because it ignores the accumulation problems of the state capitalism which emerged at the end of WWII as an Imperialist system of the first order, extending its control over E. Europe and temporarily over Manchuria. These areas were partly simply looted, and partly had to be put to work for Russia. Russian Imperialism's private life is the Comcon bloc, which functions as a huge captive market for the Soviet Union. It is the Comcon bloc that is safe surplus with the Comcon states, that is, the states that run on an equally large trade with the west. Many east European states would prefer to trade freely on the world market, but the Comcon bloc is the necessary means as a means of Comcon trade (not to mention Russian tanks) prevents this.

The basic pattern of Russian aid is imperialist. In return for military and economic aid Russia maintains a dominant hold over its clients' economies. Thus the Cuban sugar crop has been mortgaged to Russia for three decades, and in Angola 90% of the fishing rights are in Russia's hands. The basic pattern of Russian trade is also imperialist, i.e. of unequal exchange. Russia imports raw materials from the peripheral regions at less than their domestic value, and exports machinery in return at above their domestic value, thus increasing the profitability of the home economy.

For the RCP, the contradictions between East and West are "epidiotic and conjunctural", the real contradictions being those between the likes of the USA, Japan and West Germany. A statement such as this can only be based on a profound misreading of the whole of the history of the post war era, which has seen the development of a constellation of states around two antagonistic poles of interest. One is dominated economically and militarily by the USA, the other by Russia, and it is the conflicts within these blocs that are episodic.

CONCLUSION.

The political standpoint of the RCP is not clearly delineated in this work, but between the lines we can see them, as are all Trotskyists, as critical defenders of the Soviet Union, touting themselves as advisers to the "political order" in Russia. This can be seen in statements like the following:

"The Soviet bureaucracy's main hope for the future lies in rising inter-imperialist competition. This will weaken the external threat to the Soviet Union, and allow the bureaucracy to play opponents off against one another. Gorbachev has already embarked on such a course though so far with limited results." (p.246).

This attempt to re-mythify the Soviet Union, certainly has produced limited results, in that it contains nothing new to add to the tortured apologetics of Trotskyism for the Soviet social system. Lurking below the surface are all the classic assumptions of that tradition; that Russia is a transition society that must be reformed into socialism; and that in its current condition the west it deserves the support of revolutionaries. But for revolutionary Marxists, the capitalist nature of Russia means that a social revolution is necessary to destroy it, and that in its conflicts with western imperialism, revolutionary defeatism is the communist objective. This book is the RCP's colours to the mast, as opponents of such a materialist position.

WORKERS VOICE

IRELAND NORTH AND SOUTH

UNIONS ORGANISE DEFEAT

In the first week of July the all-Ireland Irish Congress of Trade Unions held its annual conference in Belfast. As well as echoing all the leftist phrasemongering of its British counterpart, the governing body also reviewed its record in the handling of recent strike activity, as the ICTU has an even more prominent role in the dis-organisation of the class struggle than the TUC.

The hearty condemnation of "discredited monetarism" accompanied by calls for a return to the glories of failed Keynesian intervention are familiar enough. Similarly, an explicit desire to avoid the "constitutional question" of the status of Northern Ireland contrasted with the Congress's headlong leap into the equally reactionary nationalism of "national interest" politics. McGuire, president of the ICTU, displayed his credentials in the central address of the meeting when he called on both British and Irish governments to step up exploitation of his members: "As we have to compete in today's highly competitive international economy, we cannot afford not to make the best possible use of our most precious resource, namely our workforce".

The desire of the unions to aid "national recovery", with the working class picking up the tab in the form of increasing unemployment, will come as no surprise to the latest victims of union tactics. Recent struggles North and South have demonstrated how these tactics seek to keep the workers within the bounds of ruling class legality, while at the same time derailing any chance of an effective fightback against the bosses by isolating strikers both geographically and by industry.

UNION COMPROMISE EQUALS UNION SABOTAGE

The eve of the ICTU conference witnessed the end of two significant strike movements in Belfast itself. After two months on strike which had seen drivers at the Royal Victoria Hospital confront the armed RIC on the picket lines, the Congress successfully negotiated a return to work just when solidarity from other

ancillary staff was beginning to become more tangible and effective. The strike began in response to new conditions proposed by the management and represented a pre-emptive action by the workers to fight the probable redundancies resulting from the package. With regard to demands, the unions achieved precisely nothing but claimed a victory in the winning of an "independent" inquiry into the dispute.

A similar "compromise" took place in a seven week province wide strike by 1,500 bus drivers, with its most militant support in Belfast's Citybus depots. In a tactic reminiscent



Workers must struggle against the unions too!

of the miners' strike, the energies of the workers were first sapped by an overtime ban before the strike "proper" was conducted in a series of token one day Friday stoppages which were announced to the management well in advance. The one "achievement" of the union settlement was a marginally increased pay offer of 5.4%, while the strings attached included acceptance of flexible rostering and compulsory overtime - the very issues which had provoked the strike in the first place!

If the workers in the North faced demoralisation and division at the hands of the capitalist left, Dublin Corporation manual workers also faced the direct power of the Irish state in their three week pay strike in June. The use of troops to smash strikes has been a regular option for bosses in Ireland over the last decade, with busmen, firemen, sewage workers and tanker drivers all facing such centrally organised scabbing on more than one occasion. This time they had been brought in to clear rubbish in Dublin, a task which they had experience of under previous regimes in 1979 and 1982.

In this struggle however a section of the 4,200 workers on strike demonstrated that they were prepared to put up more than token resistance to the attempts of capitalism to impose cuts in their standard of living. As the clearing operation began on the night of June 5th, strikers clashed with police, some in riot gear, who were escorting the army convoys, and later set fire to huge mounds of rubbish, damaging a local shopping centre.

However, it was then that the unions displayed their policing role for capitalism when officials intervened to calm the picket line. Later the unions "condemned" the use of the army while showing their contempt for any worker who attempted to put up effective resistance: "We do not want anyone saying Dublin

Corporation workers cannot conduct themselves with dignity".

With the union at the helm, the strike could only ever be led to negotiations and eventual defeat. The other option for the strikers was to organise outside of the union structure altogether, and appeal to other workers to join the struggle and raise their own demands. At the same time, a similar group of low paid state employees, 14,000 Telecom fireman workers, has been in dispute, as this article goes to press the TE workers are on the verge of strike action, but face the same fate of isolation as the Dublin Corporation workers unless the lessons of that struggle can be grasped.

The details of the Dublin Corporation "compromise", which came on June 18th, were again typically surrounded with union jargon of management concessions on "principles", attempting to disguise the absence of any real substance to the agreement. A below the rate of inflation management offer of a 7% pay increase over eighteen months was replaced by lump-sum payments of £5 and £6 over the same period, representing a percentage increase of 8.2%.

The only response from the ICTU conference on this series of minute gains (or defeats in real terms) was an attempt to grip the workers' struggles in an even tighter vice. Congress endorsed a call for a reappraisal and strengthening of "all-out" pickets, which was said to have been abused in recent disputes. In the unions' self-imposed two-tier picketing system the "all-out" is the mechanism through which solidarity action is organised, and the Congress itself is the only body which can grant it. The decision at this year's conference effectively means that strike movements will be deliberately isolated and emasculated to an even greater extent than previously, as the ICTU increases its control.

THE ROLE OF THE UNIONS

For communists, the whole spectrum of counter-revolutionary activities which the unions participate in, from the derailment of the class struggle to the involvement in semi-state bodies and even governments, are not the result of malicious leadership (as the Trotskyists claim) but of their objective function in the era of capitalist decadence.

By definition the aim of trade unionism is to negotiate for better terms for the sale of workers' labour power. But crisis-ridden capitalism is now unable even to maintain living standards over any length of time, and unions are left with the problem of how to get workers to accept the bosses' attacks via real wage cuts, redundancies and so on. The explicit period of wage restraint initiated by the "Social

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